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#421

DIME NOVELS



MOUNTAIN NED.

BEADLE AND ADAMS 89 WILLIAM STREET NEW YORK.

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MOUNTAIN NED;

OR,

THE FLYING SCOUT.

BY W. J. HAMILTON,

Author of the following Dime Novels :

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MOUNTAIN NED.

CHAPTER I.

THE FLYING SCOUT APPEARS.

CRAGS, bowlders and quartz croppings in strange confusion, deep canons, fathomless gulches and snow-capped peaks combined to make up a scene at once grand and solemn. The peaks were those of New Mexican chain, the time—midsummer, and a solitary man stood upon a bare, brown rock, looking into the gulch at his feet:—a man who had hardly seen twenty-five summers, with an erect manly figure, bold face, searching black eyes and flowing dark beard and hair. He was dressed as a border-man in buck-skin, but a certain foppishness in his attire showed that he was a sort of mountain Adonis—one of those strange persons whose lives are as free as their hard-earned money, and whose bold hearts dare any danger for the mere love of adventure.

Hush !

A sound is heard coming up the canon—a sound which he well knows, the beat of flying hoofs upon the hard bottom of the pass.

At that sound the mountaineer sunk down behind a bowlder. Almost by instinct rather than thought, his thumb fell upon the lock of his rifle, and the sharp double click was heard as he cocked it. Just at his feet the canon widened until it was nearly thirty feet across, and as he gazed, the coming horse sprung into this open space, bearing upon his back a girl with a face which was surprising in its beauty to the mountain man, to whom the sight of a woman was a rarity. His quick glance took in a jaunty figure, clad in a sort of short tunic of green cloth, with Turkish trowsers, high laced boots, gauntlets, and a neat riding-hat with a bustard-feather attached to the side by a rosette of black. The face beneath

was piquant and saucy, and short brown curling locks peeped from beneath her hat.

"Whew!" whistled the mountaineer. "Who is she—who is she—who the blazes is she? Why don't I know her, the little—What's that? Comanche, by the royal pipers!"

As he spoke he saw the girl pull up her horse, a spotted mustang of rare power, and grasp the rifle which lay across her knee. As she did so lance-heads glittered in the sun, and four Comanches with their horses and trappings blazing in barbaric ornaments rode swiftly up the pass. At the same moment four more armed in the same way dashed into the canon from the rear. The girl was in a trap, apparently.

The man on the rocks did not hesitate. He coolly brought his rifle to his shoulder and was about to fire, when he saw, to his wonder, that the warriors had paused in apparent reverence before the young girl and made no hostile sign.

"Warriors!" she cried, in the language of the Comanches. "Have you listened to the words of the Manitou who dwells in the mountains?"

"We have heard the words," said a noble-looking warrior as he rode out from among the rest. "Silver Lance has no ears for any thing save the words which came from the mouth of the prophet through the Blazing Star. We have done his work, and we have done it well."

"Now, this beats cock-fighting all to pieces," growled the mountain man in accents of utter disgust. "May I never see the Brazos again if I ever heard the like of this. She's white too—that's the worst of it, and here she is consorting with this cursed band of Comanches. I ought to give it to Silver Lance, anyhow."

He half raised his rifle as he spoke, and for a moment seemed inclined to fire, but changed his mind immediately as he thought that the shot would bring seven stalwart savages upon him.

"Comanche, Comanche!" cried a hoarse voice on the other side of the gulch. "I am here! *Beware of the Flying Scout!*"

They looked up and saw a strange being standing upon the bare brown rocks, directly over their heads!

A tall spectral figure clad in strange garments, which hung upon each side like the wings of a vulture. His long arms

were extended, and his claw-like fingers worked convulsively, as if he longed to tear his enemies in pieces.

"Away, Blazing Star!" cried the warrior, Silver Lance. "None can look on the Flying Scout and live."

The girl, as if inspired by sudden terror, gave her horse the rein and bounded away, disappearing like the lightning's flash. As she did so the mountain specter hurled something upon the earth in the midst of the warriors. There was a loud explosion and three of the Indians, terribly mangled, fell from their horses while two others were quite badly wounded. Then, to the utter surprise of the young mountain ranger, the nondescript being leaped out into the air and went down like a falling star into the gulch, a hundred feet below. At first he fell rapidly; then broad wings seemed to expand at the shoulders, and he alighted upon the earth as light as a feather. Giving a quick motion to his shoulders the wings disappeared as if by magic, and grasping a spear from the hands of a fallen warrior he rushed upon Silver Lance. A brave who threw himself in the way was pierced through the heart, and the rest, appalled by the wild valor of this incomprehensible being, fled with loosened rein, while he bounded after with a single unnatural scream of rage, running with a rapidity which surpassed any thing the young mountain ranger had ever seen. Pursuer and pursued swept down the canon and were lost to sight, and the mountaineer, astounded at what he had seen, leaped to his feet.

"I've seen a man that can fly," he said. "Blazes! How he *did* come down those rocks! And didn't he give it to that black thief with the three feathers in his head-dress! Hi, there; Jan!"

"Vere you vas?" responded a guttural voice. "I dinks I peen aschleep py mineself."

"You'd sleep ef the prairie was on fire," responded the first speaker. "Come out here or you'll be the worst licked Dutchman in New Mexico in about three minnits and a half."

"Ton't hurry a mans, all der dimes," grunted the same voice, as a white head appeared from a crevice and a portly body followed. "Jan Pliester nefer vas hurried unt nefer vill pe."

This indolent, sleepy-looking individual, with his round, good-natured Teutonic face, and his perpetual smile, dragged himself slowly forward.

"I dinks I hears somet'ings liddle vile ago, like it vas somet'ings vat vas pu'sted."

"Something bu'sted! Jan, you are enough to provoke a saint. Something bu'sted! Why you born idiot, look here."

He dragged the Dutchman to the edge of the rocks and pointed at the dead bodies of the Comanches who lay below. If he expected Jan to be in the least surprised he reckoned without his host, for the fellow looked at the bodies without any signs of interest.

"You don't mean to say that this scene does not affect you in the least?"

"Do you t'ink I vas a vool!" replied Jan. "Now, you yoost listen vile I spoke mit you coople dimes. Dem vas Indians?"

"Yes."

"Unt dey vas deat?"

"Of course."

"Vell, do you t'ink I vas afrait mit a *deat* Indian? Of dey vas alive den I vould run like ter duyvel!"

"That's good common sense, after all," said the mountaineer. "Do you know that I have seen a great curiosity in nature?"

"Spoke dot again, blease. I peen a Teuchman, unt ven you spoke dot English languages like dot I nix fer stay booty vell."

"I have seen a man who could fly."

"Dot ish nottings; I haf fly mineself goot many dimes."

"Oh, pshaw."

"Mit der goonstable after me. You pet dere vas not many beople fly so goot like me, den; I flies like von pird."

"But, look here, Jan. No fooling now. I have seen a man jump from that rock over yonder into the canon."

"Who vas bick up der bieces?"

"What pieces?"

"Of der man vat shumps. It is easy to shump down, off dere ish a soft blace to light, put it ish not so easy to shump oop again."

The patter of feet was heard in the canon, and directly after the Flying Scout came back on a run, carrying in his arms the girl whom the mountaineer had seen, just before. She was senseless and her lovely head hung over his arm apparently as lifeless as a clod.

"Gracious heaven!" cried the mountaineer. "The fiend has got the lady in his power! Hold hard there, you black imp! Drop the girl or it will be the worse for you."

"Beware!" cried the Flying Scout, in a hollow voice. "Dare not to come between the lion and his prey. She is mine, for I have won her."

Even as he spoke the young mountain man had clambered down the rocks, and stood in the bed of the canon while Jan Pliester was slowly following. The Flying Scout did not attempt to run but quietly faced the young man.

"I have warned you," he said, hoarsely, still holding the girl in his arms, "and you will not listen. What is your name, sir?"

"My name is Ned Campbell, but those who know me best call me Mountain Ned."

"I have heard men speak of you as a bold hunter and a good man. Although I have not mingled with men of my blood this many a year, still I know what they speak for I am everywhere. Nothing save good have I heard men speak of you and I would not have you for an enemy."

Ned Campbell looked at the speaker intently. He was deadly pale, like a corpse, paler even than the girl whose head lay upon his arm. But his gigantic height was all bone and muscle, and Ned knew that a struggle with him meant something dreadful.

"Then, my would-be friend," he said, boldly, "I tell you that Mountain Ned is not the boy to see a woman wronged. *Drop that girl!*"

"And if I will not?"

"*Fight!*"

The Flying Scout stood with his hand thrust into the bosom of his odd garment. His countenance assumed an expression of lofty anger at which even the bold scout trembled.

"You dare defy me—you!" he half screamed. "Do you

know who I am? Beware, lest the same fate which has taken these dead villains should come upon you."

"I can't die easier than fighting for a woman," answered Ned. "Wait; she is coming to herself, and if she says she will go with you, well and good. If not, I only allow it after I'm whipped."

"Stand aside; bar the simoon of the desert, the wind of the sea, but dare not to stop my way!"

"*Drop the girl!*" hissed Mountain Ned, as he drew a heavy bowie from his belt. "Once more I ask you for your own sake."

The Flying Scout, still holding the girl upon his arm, laughed in such a fiendish way that the rocks about him re-echoed the sound. His hand came out of the bosom of his garment and something dropped from it upon the earth. There was a loud explosion; a blinding smoke rose, shutting out every object around them, and as the fetid cloud lifted, the young man stood alone upon the floor of the canon. The Flying Scout and the girl were gone!

CHAPTER II.

STRANGE SUCCOR.

JAN PLIESTER had seen, in his indolent way, the quarrel between the Flying Scout and his friend, and reached the bottom just in time to witness the extraordinary finale. At the sudden explosion, he was for a moment startled out of his propriety.

"Somet'ing's pu'sted den, Ned," he said, quietly.

"You born fool, why didn't you chase him?" roared Ned. "Where did he go; which way?"

"Town, of course," said Jan. "Der grount opened under his feet unt let him town mit himself unt der gal. Dot vas der duyvel, sure."

"Why didn't you watch him?"

"Vatch him! I vas plind mit der schmoke. Unt I nefer schmells so mooch schnell in swansey year."

"I don't wonder you say so. Curse the smoke ; I wonder what it was he threw down. It was the cutest trick I ever heard of in my life, that I will say for him, but I'll remember the scoundrel, and some day I'll get even with him. Look out, here are horsemen."

The two dashed up the rocks and concealed themselves among the bowlders, just as a body of Comanches, perhaps a hundred strong, poured into the pass. At their head, his face stained with blood which flowed from a cut over his eye, where he had been hit by a flying fragment of the exploded bomb, rode Silver Lance, the Comanche chief. He was a noble looking warrior, straight as the weapon from which he took his name, with a clear cut face which only needed to be white instead of bronze to be the face of one of the conquerors of the grand old Roman world.

"The warriors hear !" he cried. "Ten horses to the warrior who slays the Flying Scout ; twenty to the one who brings back the Blazing Star safe to me."

A perfect howl of rage and grief burst from the Comanche band as they saw extended upon the bed of the canon the mangled forms of those who had been slain by the terrible missile hurled by the Flying Scout. They dismounted in hot haste, and while a portion searched about for a trail, others dug graves for their slain among the debris of the canon and laid them there. They had no time to return to the Comanche village or the bodies would have been carried back to be buried according to their sacred rites. As it was they could only make graves for them where the wolves could not reach them, and lay their weapons by them as they slept the last sleep.

As the work was finished a shout announced that a trail had been found, and to the disgust of Mountain Ned the Indian pointed up the rocks toward his place of refuge ! It was evident that the two whites were in an unsafe position.

There was no time for flight, for half a dozen Indians were already climbing over the rocks ; so, grasping his revolvers, Mountain Ned placed his back to the naked rocks and faced the Indians boldly. Foremost among those who bounded up the rocks was Silver Lance, who uttered a shout of delight as he saw who stood at bay.

"You, Mountain Ned?" he cried in broken English. "Me Silver Lance—me great Comanche chief. Look! You bring Lipau warriors, you bring Texan braves and fight my men at Casa Grande. You beat—you take many scalps, and now we make revenge. We burn you to-day."

"You've got to *take* me first, Silver Lance," said Mountain Ned. "Whatever happens to *me*, *you've* got to die. I've marked you; my eye is on you, and I never miss my man at this distance. Come on, the whole gang."

"I makes some fights too," said Jan Pliester, as he took his station beside his friend. "You took care vat you do."

Jan had no confidence in revolver or rifle, but he *did* believe in the old-fashioned Dutch roer which he held in his hand, a ponderous weapon, but one capable of doing good service at close quarters.

"I been a *Yaager* vonce, mein Indian frents," continued Jan. "Off you ton't gone away mit yourselfs I shoots you on der middle of next Shanuary; I does, py eracious, now I spoke mit you mit my mout."

By this time the whole force of Indians, with the exception of the horse-guards, were clustered upon the platform in front of the two determined men who calmly awaited their movements.

"I give you chance," said Silver Lance. "S'pose you join our tribe and be our warrior, you live."

"I've lived a white life so far, and I'm going to die a white death. You can't scare an old Texan with fire; do your fiercest, for I'm going to begin shooting."

Seeing that he had turned his revolver upon the chief, half a dozen braves sprung in front and rushed at him. As they did so, the revolvers began to crack, and the roer, loaded to the muzzle with buck-shot, was discharged with a deafening roar, and actually tore a lane through the thickest of the Indian band. So terrible was the execution that for a moment the Indians recoiled, but the deep voice of Silver Lance urged them on.

"Are the Comanche braves turned women?" he cried. "Do they fear two men? Their weapons are empty; rush at them altogether!"

They gathered to obey him, when they were startled by a

strange hissing sound overhead, and looking up, saw two large globes about four inches in diameter, spitting fire as they came down upon their heads. Quick as thought, Mountain Ned fell upon his face, dragging Jan Pliester with him, and not a moment too soon, for, as the dark globes struck the earth, they exploded with terrible effect. They had been hurled by skillful hands, for they struck in the very midst of the compact body of Indians, and when they burst, scattered death and confusion all around. Groans of agony were heard on every hand; in the midst of the hasty rush of terrified men, who thought only how to escape from the deadly explosives hurled from the mountains by the Spirit of the Rocks—a being they adore as among the lesser spirits of earth. Before they had reached the bottom of the canon, two more shells fell among the horses, and as they exploded, the frightened animals scattered in every direction, and their masters, no less frightened, followed at headlong speed. The horse-guards only were in the saddle, and they followed the flying horses at their best speed. Those of the Comanches who could run made the best use of their motive power, forgetting even the dead and wounded who lay upon the bloody rocks.

"Hurrah for you, Jan! I never saw a gun tear a crowd all to pieces like that mountain howitzer of yours. But who slung those shells, I should like to know? They were shells: I've followed Ripley's artillery too far not to know. But, I didn't hear any gun."

"Nix; dere vas no gun. Sumpotty throwed dem town der hill. I dink ve petter gone away right now, vile I spoke, or dem fellers t'row shells mit us."

"There is something worth looking after here," cried Ned. "I'm going to follow this clue, for I think it will lead me to the hiding-place of the Flying Scout. Come on."

They dashed up the mountain together, for even the indolent Dutchman had become interested in their strange friend, whoever it might be. Clambering from ledge to ledge they reached the top, and saw the light but towering figure of the Flying Scout running rapidly across the broad plateau upon the top of the mountain.

"Hurrah!" shouted Mountain Ned. "There he goes, the loping vagabond:—or no—that won't do. He's just saved

our lives, and we won't hurt him, but run him down we must. I've got to save the girl!"

The Flying Scout kept ahead of them with the greatest ease, while they strained every nerve to overtake him. His wild laugh rung out across the mountains as he ran.

"They chase the Flying Scout. Ha, ha, ha! They chase the mountain terror in his secret haunts. I laugh at them and their wiles—I am free in the mountains—free, free, free!"

The last word was uttered in a tone which was almost a shriek.

"Hold on!" cried Mountain Ned. "I want to talk to you."

"Stay where you are, then," cried the Scout, "and I'll hear you."

Ned stopped at once, holding back his friend.

"I want to ask about the girl. You have got her hidden somewhere, and I must know where it is."

"That is none of your business. The girl is mine and I will keep her. Mind you, she is as safe with me as in a sanctuary, for I will guard her with as jealous care as ever priest guarded his idol. She is my child, and I will keep her!"

"Your child!"

"If I choose to call her so, that is my affair. I tell you again that the girl is safe, and *where* she is, neither you nor any other man shall know. Turn back then, for when you follow me you follow a phantom, one who is sure to elude you, follow close as you may. Young man, I like you. Bold of heart, ready of hand, you remind me of my own youth. I have been of service to you once and I will be so again. When you think of me, think of me as one in my grave. Let who can rise again for the good of his kind."

Something in the solemn words of the strange man struck a chill into the heart of Mountain Ned. Not that he feared the scout, but he knew that this was no ordinary being.

"You warn *me* back," cried Ned, "but you do not tell me what I ask. You seem to know me well, and must be aware that I do not give up any thing easily upon which I set my

heart. This girl I must see, and hear from her own lips that she is satisfied to stay with you."

"You shall not see her, young man. I know the hot Campbell blood, and that I risk something by refusing, but it will not be well for you to make an enemy of me."

"I take the risk, stranger; I will not harm you, for your interposition has been of use to me this day, but I will follow you, no matter where you go, until you have led me to your secret haunts."

"Then come, fool that you are. I could slay you, but I will not, for there was the time when I loved the Campbell name, and for the sake of the old time I spare you. You *will* follow me?"

"Yes; to the death."

"I'll lead you such a dance as you never dreamed of. Come, come, come; follow the steps of the Flying Scout."

Whirling suddenly, he darted away at a speed which was wonderful, and which put Ned Campbell, staunch man as he was, to his best speed. The plateau over which they sped was level as a floor and was nearly all quartz. Directly in front was an irregular crack or crevice, fully fifteen feet wide at its narrowest point, and toward this the Flying Scout headed. He went over it like a bird and slightly slackened his speed to see if Campbell pulled up at the fissure, but he came on with the bound of a hunted stag, never slackening his speed, and cleared the crevice in gallant style.

"Well done!" shouted the Flying Scout. "The blood of the Highlands is in your veins."

Jan Pliester pulled up at the leap and began to follow down in search of a narrower spot, and while he was doing this the Flying Scout and Ned sped on across the level at their utmost speed. Campbell knew the ground well and that just in front stood a fearful precipice, over two hundred feet in height. Surely the Flying Scout must turn at bay here.

"Hold," he cried. "You are rushing on to your death. The precipice yawns before you."

"Will you teach *me* the secrets of the hills?" cried the Flying Scout, looking over his shoulder. "For you, there is danger in these rocks—but for me—behold!"

As he spoke his robe expanded and took the shape of gigantic wings. With a shout of derisive laughter he launched himself over the precipice and went down into the awful depths. Mountain Ned, bending upon one knee at the brink, watched him as he went down, assuming the appearance of a great double globe as the wings collapsed and sunk to his sides, and he looked up to meet the wild glance of the young mountaineer.

"Ha, ha, ha! Will you follow now? Who can keep the trail of the Flying Scout?"

He turned and darting suddenly behind a point of rocks he was gone, leaving Mountain Ned filled with wonder, staring at the place where he had stood.

CHAPTER III.

VERACITY ENODGRASS.

By this time the Dutchman had found a mean to cross the chasm and joined his friend upon the rocks.

"Dot vellers vas a vool," he said. "Dere vas no more of him left ash a crease-spot."

"Do you think he is dead?"

"Deat? Of course he vas deat!"

"You are mistaken, Jan; he lighted like a falling feather, laughed at me, and ran in behind the rocks. Let's see if we can get down on the level and take up the trail."

They searched about and found a crevice which extended from the top of the rocks to the level upon which the Flying Scout had alighted so easily. After half an hour's laborious work they managed to get down.

"Hard work, strangers," said a voice at Ned's elbow as he reached the ground. "Mebbe you wouldn't believe it, but I made that crack in the mountain myself. I sneezed one day an' the rocks were rent asunder."

"Who are you?" demanded Ned, rather roughly, for he was startled at the sudden apparition. But as he glanced at

the stranger all traces of anger vanished and he began to laugh. Before him stood one of those long, lank, yellow-haired, comical-looking men who are Yankee by birth but who, while adopting the vernacular of the trapper, retain many of the peculiar phrases and forms of speech peculiar to "Down East." He was greasy and smoke-begrimed, but looked like a tough and wiry customer. "I'm Veracity Snodgrass, the man that never told a lie. I *couldn't* lie; my father never would 'low it, when I was a boy. He'd take an' wallop me—lord love my heart alive, how he *could* wallop a boy when he set his h'art on it! It was beautiful to see him approach a boy an' invite him to take orf his jackit. I never—"

"What are you doing here?" interrupted Ned.

"What am I doin' hyar? What ar' *you* doin' hyar? Seems to me you ain't got the conteract to roam these terraqueous mount'ins an' these pieceful vales alone. I'm a hunter an' trapper. I've killed more grizzlies than any man in the world. Yisterday I met one up hyar by the hot spring an' I axed him ef he was spilin' fur a muss. He wur, an' I jest tuk that thar b'ar by the throat an' choked him until he run his tongue out an' he begged fur mercy like a dog. But I fixed him."

"What kind of a bear was that?"

"A full growed grizzly, old Eph hisself, 'bout fifteen thousand pound weight!"

"Whew w-w-w!" whistled Mountain Ned. "*Veracity* Snodgrass, I think they called you."

"You bet!"

"Then, after that story I may safely say that you ought to have a different name. How would Ananias do?"

"Look hyar, stranger; I'm a sleepin' lion now, but rise my temper an' I'm the unchained terror of the western wilds. I never lie. Ef I say a thing I mean just what I say, an' no man livin' ever heerd me utter an untruth. Ef thet man lives I offer two thousand beaver-pelts to the person that sets him down afore me, that I may rend him asunder in my wrath. Do you know what I did with a man down hyar by St. Joe, thet hinted thet I lied? I throwed that man across the Big Muddy—*clean*. It's only about a mile acrost whar I

slung him, you see, an' I waant right down bilin' mad or I'd 'a' sent him way acrost to Ossawattamie."

"You are right, my friend," said Mountain Ned. "You can't lie worth a bit. Perhaps you have heard of me, Captain Ned Campbell of Brazos?"

"Know you? Bet I do! Why, you saved my life onc't."

"The deuce I did! Was I asleep at the time?"

"Not any, you was riding the plains with your rangers up by Casa Grande an' I was leggin' it acrost the plains with 'bout twenty 'Rapahoes arter me, but you come down on 'em like a flood an' cleaned 'em out."

"I remember that circumstance but I did not see you."

"'Course not; I was snakin' it among the ruins when you was carvin' up them cussid 'Rapahoes. You chased 'em out of sight an' that's the last I see of you until the presint moment."

"Let that go for the present, Mr. Snodgrass," said Mountain Ned, "I—"

"Hold on, Cap; *mister*, did ye say? Now don't you never insult me ag'in by sayin' *that* word to me. I'm V. Snodgrass Esq., the pride an' flower of the rollin' West, but I ain't no *mister*."

"All right, Snodgrass; beg pardon for the slip of the tongue. I was chasing a man when I came down here, a fellow who calls himself Flying Scout, and who jumped off these rocks."

Snodgrass looked up the rocks with a comical expression on his freckled face.

"From up thar, stranger?" he asked, pointing to the summit.

Campbell nodded gravely, and an expression of whimsical despair came into the eyes of V. Snodgrass.

"I'm afraid you boys down by the Brazos don't mind tellin' a whopper now an' then, Cap. Why; it's a hundred feet up thar."

"I tell you he jumped down—or rather flew down, for he unfolded huge wings to aid him in the descent."

"Oh, yes, yes," said Veracity, becoming himself suddenly. "Now I seem to understand who you mean. I've see'd the critter up hyur on the Navajo Mount'ins, an' the pizen critter jumped clean over a mount'in 'leven mile high."

"How high?"

"Leven or maybe ten an' a half. I ain't a-goin' ter lie fur half a mile. Any way, he jumped half a mile higher than the top, so I reckon it war 'leven mile, *good*."

"You vas nice vellers," said the Dutchman, who had been listening intently to the fearful lies of Snodgrass. "You sees dot yourself, eh?"

"Sartin."

"He shump 'leven mile, eh?"

"Jist about."

"You vas a liar; I ton't spoke no fairer as dot ven I says you vas a liar mit der first vater. Now look oud; you git mad mit me unt I preak you mit more ash fifty bieces."

Snodgrass burst into a good-natured laugh and extended his hand.

"Bully for you, Dutchy; what's yer handle."

"Vat?"

"What's yer handle—yer cognomen—yer autograph—thunder!—What's yer name?"

"Oh, yah; Jan Pliester."

"Now I'll tell ye what it is Captin Campbell," said Snodgrass, "I'm goin' to jine myself to your party, 'cause the Kimmanche are loose an' b'ilin' over with wrathy fury. I ain't a bad shot, an' mebbe I kin make myself useful."

"I'm very glad of your help, Snodgrass," said Ned. "Now tell me the truth; have you seen this Flying Scout?"

"Cap, ez I war comin' through this canon I see'd a man ahead of me. He had on a kind of gray cloak that came down to his knees, an' when he see me he giv a kind of screech an' hopped over the rocks. When I got to ther place I couldn't see hide nor hair of him."

"That is the man," said Ned; "I must run him down, for he has in his hands a beautiful girl, known as the Blazing Star."

"Her! Thunder, Cap, ain't she a bu'ster? Why, when them greasy thieves, the Kimmanche, caught me on the Santa Fe trail, didn't she let me loose an' give me back my hoss an' shooter? Cap, I'll go my last beaver-pelt an' throw in my own pelt to help thet thar gal."

"Understand me first; I don't want you to hurt the Flying Scout. He has never injured me, and I don't think that

he ever has really wronged this girl—Blazing Star, as the reds called her.”

“Yes; take care up thar, stranger; yer mighty keerless.”

A stone had become detached and rolled down the cliff, flying remarkably close to the head of Mountain Ned for an accident. Ned looked up, and, as a second stone whizzed by them he caught a glimpse of a brown hand and arm.

“Get back out of sight,” said Campbell in a low voice. “Some one is throwing stones at us purposely.”

They ran back into the shelter of the gully, and as they did so a wild looking Indian, in the peculiar dress of an Indian prophet, raised himself upon the rocks and hurled another stone at them.

“I see him,” cried Snodgrass. “It ar’ Minnitash, the Hill Prophet. Let me git a bead on the old cuss.”

The old Indian was dancing wildly about on the rocky platform, cursing in good strong Indian the dastardly white men who had stolen the Blazing Star from him—his assistant in the mummeries of his strange office.

“I understand it now,” said Campbell. “The old prophet thinks that we have stolen the girl. Let us undeceive him at once.”

“Why is the prophet of the hills mad with his white brothers?” he demanded, raising his voice and speaking rapidly in the Comanche tongue.

“The white men are cowards, and have stolen the Sunlight of the Comanche tribe. Where is the pride of the village, the best hope of the Comanche prophet.”

“We have not taken her from you, oh prophet,” said Campbell. “The man who stole her is my enemy, the Flying Scout.”

“Hah!” screamed the Indian. “I drink the blood of the Flying Scout, the thief of white blood. Look; I am a vulture on his track. I will eat his flesh when he lies dead. Let the white men leave the mountains, and Minnitash will not call upon the rocks to cover them, guilty as they are.”

Campbell drew back laughing, and the half-crazed prophet bounded across the platform leaving them alone.

“That old sneak will follow the Flying Scout until he has the girl or is killed himself,” said Campbell. “Let us see if we can not find a trail.”

They searched, but the rocks gave them back no sign. They determined to find a sheltered camp and watch until one or the other managed to catch sight of the mysterious Flying Scout. But they waited three days and still no sign. On the fourth day Snodgrass and Jan went out together, leaving Ned in camp. He had reasons of his own for wishing to prosecute his search alone that day. The two men, who had become fast friends, shouldered their pieces and marched away, while Ned sat on a log on the bank of a little stream, indolently kicking aside the earth with the toe of his moccasin. As he did so a small fragment of dusky red metal appeared upon the surface."

"Hullo!" cried Ned. "If that were anywhere else I should call it a small nugget."

He picked up the fragment and scraped away the outer crust, and the dull gleam of the precious metal rewarded his pains.

"Whew! As Snodgrass says, this is a find. I'll bet money I've struck it rich, and if I have—"

"Good-day!" said a melodious voice at his elbow. "You are Captain Campbell, I believe?"

He whirled suddenly, dropping the nugget and crushing it into the earth with his heel, and stood face to face with Blazing Star. She smiled sadly as she saw what disposal he made of the gold.

"You need not take all that pains, Mr. Campbell," she said, in pure English. "No one can know better than I that there is gold to be had for the digging in this mountain chain. Come here."

She took him to the edge of the stream, and thrusting her hand into the clear water, took up a handful of sand. Spreading it out in her palm, he could see that nearly half the mass was gold-dust!

"You are rich if you desire riches, Captain Campbell. As for me, all the wealth of the world is nothing to me since I am doomed to pass my life here. I have been given to understand that you pursue me with the idea that I am in danger from the man you call the Flying Scout."

"I saw him take you from the Indians, and that you had fainted in his arms."

"You know that I am friendly with the Indians?" she gasped, her cheek turning pale. "You have seen me with them?"

"Ay; I know that Sada, Sunlight, and the Blazing Star are one. I know that you have ridden with the Comanche upon many a foray, and for all this I do not hate you, although I am of white blood."

"And why do you not hate me?" she cried, wildly. "Do you not know I deserve the worst you can think of me?"

"No," he replied, firmly. "On the contrary, I have heard much good of you. I have heard it whispered, and I believe it, that when the Blazing Star rides with the Comanche upon a foray, she rides to help those who fall into the hands of the Comanche. Do you deny it?"

"Yes," she said, faintly, "I can not claim—"

"Once your party made a prisoner on the Santa Fe trail, whose name is Snodgrass, a man who never tells a lie—but a succession of stupendous *untruths*."

She smiled in spite of herself, for it was evident that the name of Snodgrass was not unfamiliar to her.

"You smile," he said; "you can not deny this."

"If I acknowledge this, what good will it do, sir? I care not how depraved a person may become, there are times when he has moments of tenderness, and performs deeds which savor of goodness. As for me, I am all evil; you must believe me when I say it."

"You are not."

"I am! But, to my business here, and then I must go. I have nothing to fear from the Flying Scout; I come and go at my will, as you see; therefore your chivalry is wasted upon me."

"I have followed you before, in the hope of doing you a service. Your words have taken that hope from me, and now I shall follow you with another object. They call me Mountain Ned, the Red Ranger, the Texan Bravo, and a dozen names of that sort, because they think me a brave man: But, the strongest bow before women, and I am at your feet. I have loved you since that day when we fought upon the upper Brazos, and your lance pierced my horse to the heart."

"You cheered me when we turned our reins," said the

girl, softly. "Your men struck down warriors on every hand, but not a shot touched me, and every blade passed me by."

"I would have killed the man who harmed you," he cried.

She half started toward him, and was about to give him her hand, when a peculiar whistle sounded through the canon. She uttered a cry, and bounding back, disappeared in the mountain pass.

CHAPTER IV.

MINNITASH AND THE FLYING SCOUT.

"SHE shall not escape me thus," muttered Mountain Ned, as he bounded away in pursuit, never thinking that he would have any difficulty in overtaking her. But, when he reached the mouth of the pass into which she had plunged, the girl was nowhere to be seen. The rapid flight amazed him, but he kept on down the pass at his best speed, hoping at each turn to come upon the flying girl. At length the pass ended abruptly in a rugged wall not quite perpendicular, but still a hard place to ascend. Satisfied that she must have ascended here, Ned sprung rapidly from rock to rock and reached the platform above. As his head showed above the rocks he heard a fierce yell and dropped back out of sight. A moment after and the sound of angry voices came to his ears.

"Dog!" screamed a voice in the Indian tongue; "you have stolen the Blazing Star from my hands. Give her back to me or die."

"Minnitash," responded a hoarse voice which Campbell recognized as that of the Flying Scout, "beware of me, the destroyer of your race. My arm is not weak or my strength abated, and if we meet in battle you must die the death. Go; I give you your life."

"Minnitash is more than a prophet," snarled the Comanche. "He is a warrior, and his foot does not go back from

the war-trail. Silver Lance is not stronger than the prophet when his blood is hot."

"What man of all the tribe dare face Ghib-en-dah, the Flying Man of the Hills?" replied the strange being proudly. "See; I have given you life because I would not lift my hand against one whose locks are gray. Once for all, go your ways in peace and leave me to do my work."

The Indian shook his head fiercely, and as he did so Ned Campbell raised himself in such a way that without being seen, he could watch the impending struggle. He saw old Minnitash, his iron-gray hair floating loosely about his fantastic dress, boldly facing the Flying Scout, who stood just in front with one foot advanced, his gray robe, covered with feathers, floating about him in a fleecy cloud. He had no weapon, but his claw-like fingers opened and closed like the talons of an eagle, while his fierce eyes gleamed ominously from under his overhanging eyebrows.

"You have hidden the Blazing Star, and will not give her up," hissed Minnitash. "I will not go away unless I know."

"You have been kind to the girl you call the Blazing Star, and for that reason I would not shed your blood. Go, while there is yet time."

"Give up the Blazing Star," screamed Minnitash, suddenly swinging a hatchet in the air and springing upon the Flying Scout. His action was quick but not so rapid as the motion of his opponent, who shot out his strong right hand and clasped the Indian by the wrist.

So terrible was the power of his arm that the very bones seemed to crack under the pressure, and the hatchet fell to the earth. But, recovering himself by a sudden effort, the red prophet locked his arms about the body of his foe, and for a moment held even him powerless in his grasp. It was only a momentary advantage, however, for, throwing his left arm about the waist of the Indian, Flying Scout literally tore him from the earth, hurled him over his hip and planted his foot upon the neck of the conquered man.

"You dare to measure strength with me, red hound that you are!" cried the wild being. "Dog, you shall die by my hand."

Crushed beneath the heavy foot, the old prophet never

winned, and his stern old face had even a look of triumph in it. If he must die, it was better to fall by the hand of this unconquerable man than by any other not so strong.

"The white man will strike," said the prophet, calmly, as the Flying Scout clutched the hatchet which had fallen to the earth and whirled it above his head. As he did so he raised his foot slightly and Minnitash, writhing suddenly aside, darted up like a serpent from his coil and catching the feet of his enemy dashed him suddenly to the earth, his head striking the rocks with considerable violence. The hatchet flew out of his hands and went rattling down the rocks. Minnitash threw himself upon the prostrate man, who, half stunned by the blow, was not sufficiently himself to offer strong resistance. They rolled over and over upon the rocks, Minnitash striving with all his power to fasten his teeth in the throat of the Flying Scout, but he found his fangs resisted by a hard piece of leather which encircled the throat like a collar. For five minutes the struggle continued, and Minnitash felt that, while his strength was going fast, that of the white man was increasing at each moment. Now the prophet would have broken away, if possible, but the hands of the Flying Scout held him fast.

"Treacherous dog," he growled. "Wait; in a moment you shall see with whom you have to deal."

He began to struggle again, and after a desperate effort managed to turn the Indian and get his knee upon his breast and his hand upon the brown throat.

"Now, snake," he said; "you writhed your self clear once, see if you can do it again."

Minnitash did his best but the unnatural strength which despair had given him was spent and he lay, supine, under the hands of the white man.

"I have not spared a Comanche for ten years," muttered the recluse, "and it served me right when I would have let you escape to have you turn upon me. Pray to the demons you serve and see if they will take you out of my hands."

Minnitash began a wild chant for he saw that death was near. The Flying Scout caught him by the waist and shoulder and whirled him shrieking into the air, designing to cast

him down the precipice. At this moment a cry rent the air ; the Blazing Star ran in and caught him by the arm, speaking a few hurried words, the import of which Ned Campbell did not catch.

"Why should I spare him, Alecta?" replied the Flying Scout. "I offered him his life but he would not go unless I told him where you were. Stand aside, and let me send him to his doom."

"Never shall it be done!" she cried, boldly. "This old man, Indian as he is, has treated me kindly, and it was only his regard for me which made him assail you. Set him free at once!"

The Flying Scout dropped the old prophet, who fell almost senseless upon the platform. This weakness only lasted for a moment, and then he was on his feet, looking fiercely at his enemy.

"The girl saves your life, prophet," said the Flying Scout, sternly. "Thank her for it ; a moment more and you were dead."

"Blazing Star," said the old prophet, in an almost tender voice, "will you come back to the Comanche lodges? Silver Lance is a madman ; no man dare touch him or come near his lodge, since he has lost the Blazing Star. The council-fire will go out unless you stand by it ; the spirits will not listen to the voice of Minnitash when you do not speak for him. Let us go."

"Not now, Minnitash. I have work to do in the mountains before I can return to the lodges of the Comanches. See ; I bend all men to my will, even the enemy you dread so much, the great Flying Man of the Hills."

"Do you fear the Flying Man? Does he compel you to stay?"

"Am I not free? Did I not come of my own will to save Minnitash from the wrath of the Flying Man?"

"It is good," said the old prophet ; "Blazing Star is chief of the Flying Man as well as woman chief of the Comanches. Why does she let him slay the Comanches with the balls which make thunder and burst?"

"I have no power over that," replied the girl ; "but, I hope to make him a friend to the tribe."

The lips of the scout were set in a grim way which made this hope seem very faint.

"What shall I say to Silver Lance when I go back to his lodge?"

"A week is seven suns; when seven suns have passed I will be in my lodge and ready to go to the hunt or fight."

"Good; I will go back and tell this to Silver Lance. But, will the Flying Man let you go?"

"She is free to come and go at her will," replied the Flying Man. "I do not bind her with a chain."

The Indian bowed gravely and turned to depart. Something which he had forgotten made him come back.

"Let the Flying Man remember that we are enemies," he said. "Minnitash will never forget or forgive the man whose foot has been upon his neck. When we meet again, we will fight until one or the other is dead."

"The prophet has a brave heart," said the Scout, quietly. "Let it be as he says; when we meet, we will fight as bravely as we can and let the best man win."

"Minnitash is not good for the Flying Man, but he will do his best. I am gone."

He turned again and hurried over the rocks at a speed hardly to be looked for in one of his age after such a struggle. The Flying Scout watched him until out of sight and then turned to the Blazing Star.

"The old villain! He turned on me like a tiger and but that my head is wonderfully thick he would have killed me. I can't say that I understand why you want to have him spared."

"You do not know what injury you might have done yourself if you had killed Minnitash. Our project is at an end if he is slain before I find his secret."

"Ha!"

"He is the depository of that which we seek. Where he has hidden it even, I cannot tell, but I shall know in time. But, do you know that Silver Lance is very pressing in his offers of marriage?"

"The red thief! You must fight him off as long as possible, for it would not do for you to be driven from the village

yet. Silver Lance is a brave warrior, but do you think he is pure Indian?"

"Sometimes I think that he is not an Indian at all," she said, in a musing tone. "I know that he has been with the tribe longer than I, and was recognized as a chief when I came among them. But, at times, he speaks in a manner which either shows that he has had much intercourse with the whites or is a white man himself."

"It does not make much difference," said the Flying Scout. "I shall one day know the truth."

"Don't be rash," she said, with a shudder. "You know what your fate will be if you are taken by the tribe."

"I know," he said, quietly; "but danger and I have stood face to face too often for a little thing to daunt me. I have given my life to vengeance; I will carry my vengeance to the end. Have you seen this Captain Campbell?"

"Yes," said Aleeta, with a blush.

"You are getting personal," said Mountain Ned, rising suddenly. "Mr. Flying Scout, how do you do?"

The strange being bent a fierce look upon the speaker, and seemed for a moment like a tiger about to spring.

CHAPTER V:

THE LOST DAUGHTER.

SILVER LANCE sat in his lodge in the Comanche village which stood in a beautiful valley, a few miles to the south of the mountain pass in which the opening scenes of this narrative were enacted. It was one of the largest villages, and over this Silver Lance ruled as a king over his subjects. He had in his following nearly five hundred lodges and over that number of fighting men. Indeed, his band was the strongest in that section, and as bold as it was strong. He had ridden at the head of a thousand warriors, unchecked by the cowardly Mexicans through two States of upper Mexico, burning and slaying as he went, and bringing back among others the daughter of a Gov-

ernor as prisoner. Proud as a Roman Centurion, and as brave, he brooked no opposition and had none. Yet, Silver Lance was not happy.

Why?

He loved the Blazing Star, and she did not look as kindly on his suit as he wished. Not that she did not give him any hope, for she put him off laughingly and said that she preferred to be a warrior rather than a wife. He was powerful, but even he did not dare to bend her to his will.

He lay, half reclining, on a pile of robes in his grand lodge, before which his lance, upholding his shield, was thrust into the ground. The lodge had many articles of comfort and even luxury seldom seen in an Indian home. He himself had adopted in part the costume of the whites, and wore beneath his embroidered *serape*, torn from some Mexican victim, the beaded hunting-shirt of a western trapper. His head was covered by a black sombrero with a drooping feather. This was his everyday dress. When the note of war sounded none went out more gaudy in Indian finery than Silver Lance.

"Who waits there?" he cried, angrily.

The lodge curtain was lifted and an armed savage appeared at the entrance.

"Have the scouts come in, Mahinda?"

The Indian nodded and remained silent.

"They have brought no tidings?"

The guard shook his head and Silver Lance struck his clenched hand savagely upon the skin upon which he lay extended.

"They are blind as bats or owls. I must go myself and see what I can do. Has the old prophet, Minnitash, come back?"

"Minnitash is here!" replied the voice of that person as he forced his way into the lodge. "Go, Mahinda; a chief and a prophet would talk."

The man went out, leaving the two together.

"You have seen her?" cried Silver Lance, eagerly.

"Yes," was the laconic reply.

A look of eager delight came into the dark face of the chief, and a dusky red glow flashed up in his tawny cheek. At a glance, the most casual looker-on could have seen that

this wild man of the prairies loved the Blazing Star, the pride of the Comanche village.

"Is she a prisoner?"

"She says not; she saved me to-day from the wrath of the Flying Man, who obeys her in all things save one."

"And that one thing? Speak it, that a chief may hear."

"He will not cease to slay the Comanches, even for her."

"Good; when a man seeks vengeance, let his revenge be deep. The Flying Man is an enemy after my own heart. When we meet blood must stain the earth either from his veins or from mine."

"So have I sworn and I will keep my word. Hearken to my words, chief of the Comanches. On the other side of the mountain lies a great band of warriors of the white nation."

"Mexicans?" demanded the chief. "What do the true descendants of Anabuac care for the pale children of the South? They only come to glut our vengeance more fully."

"They are not Mexicans, great chief. They are Texans and free trappers, men who go to a fight as to a banquet. But they come on a peaceful errand if you will have peace."

"Whom seek they here?"

"There is a man of Mexico who has lost his child. That was twelve years ago, when you rode at the head of your warriors into the great city of the North, Chihuahua. Then you snatched a child from the arms of a flying woman and killed the woman who held the child. It is this girl they seek."

"Wagh; I remember well of what you speak. Does the white man whose hair is gray seek this girl?"

"Yes. He brings rich presents, rifles, powder and ball for the chief of the village; blankets and horses for the braves—what they choose—if the girl is given up."

"How many of the fighting men of Texas are there?"

The prophet held up both hands ten times extending the fingers in each hand. The Texan band numbered one hundred men.

Silver Lance mused for a space, with a look of doubt in his face. Against a hundred Mexicans he would have marched boldly with but fifty of his warriors. But a hundred Texans and free trappers was another matter, and no one knew it better than he.

"Let the man whose hair is gray come to the Comanche village alone. If we can not make peace, he shall go as freely as he came."

"He will not come unless three of the best of the tribe take his place in the camp of the white men."

"It is good; send Hualpa, Dezajed and Hundo to the camp of the white men and let three of the white men come to me. They shall be safe. And now, speak to me of the Blazing Star."

The prophet narrated in detail all that had happened in the struggle with the Flying Scout, and gave the message of the girl chief."

"I am content; send the three chiefs to the Texan camp."

Half an hour later three of the bravest leaders of the Comanche band, accompanied by a boy, rode out of the village and took their way through the passes. They were unarmed, save one, who bore a lance upon which fluttered a white silk banner, part of the spoils of a raid into Mexico. A ten miles' ride through the dark passes brought them to the open plain beyond, when they came in sight of a camp of white men, who watched their approach coolly enough, for they had seen the white flag floating from the lance-point. The Indians rode into the camp as quietly as if into their own village, for they had been taught that the white man respected the flag of peace. A derisive yell from the wild rangers greeted them as they dismounted.

"Let a chief speak to me," said Hualpa, speaking Mexican fluently. "I am come from the Comanche village, sent by Silver Lance. I have a message for the Gray Hair who has lost his child."

A noble-looking man glittering with orders stepped out to meet them. The face was Spanish, without a taint of Indian blood—something rather rare in Mexico. This was Senor Lopez Castelar, once Governor of Chihuahua, but now a private citizen.

"What message do you bring from the chief?" demanded the gentleman.

"Let the gray-haired father come to the village and talk with Silver Lance. He shall be safe."

"What surety have I that no treachery is meant? I have suffered too much from the Comanches to trust them."

"We are come to stay," replied Hualpa. "When the white man comes back he must promise that we shall go free."

"Who will guide us?"

"This boy," replied Hualpa. "We brought him for this. You may take two of your best men with you to the village."

Senor Castelar did not hesitate. Calling out two men, one of them his son, a young man in the uniform of a Mexican colonel, he departed, leaving the Indians in the camp. They picketed their horses quietly and then suffered themselves to be placed under guard. The Texans looked at them curiously, for the three were well known as among the bravest of the Comanche tribe.

The Texans were men of all ages, armed to the teeth, chosen from among the most desperate fighters upon the border. Senor Castelar had good advice when he chose these men to penetrate the country of this tribe of Western Arabs, for they were little less. The three Indians felt that their leader had done well in taking peaceful measures with such enemies, for not a man among them but looked as if fighting was a pastime.

"Say, Rube," said one of the toughest looking among the free trappers. "This is a gallus-lookin' lot we've got, ain't it? I know that Hualpa; he's the cuss that struck up Barau's ranche an' killed his stockmen last summer."

"I'm bound to hev his ha'r, then," said the man addressed. "He killed old Jose, and that greaser was a good boy. Hope the senor won't make any terms."

"He won't; that cuss Silver Lance never lets up on his grip, bet yer life. I know the breed, fur I've fit 'em thirty year, an I ain't done it for nothin'."

In the meantime Senor Castelar and his party rode rapidly down the passes to the Comanche village. As they came out of the pass, five hundred armed and painted warriors, glittering with golden amulets and beads, their spear-heads shining in the sun and their plumes dancing to the breeze from the mountain, suddenly inclosed them, and with guttural shouts escorted them down the slope into the village. The chief

had seized the opportunity for display and his whole available force was paraded in view of the Spaniard, whom he wished to impress strongly as to his power. But the Spaniard was of the stock which marched from Tampa Bay to the Rocky Mountains under grand old De Soto, and he, at least, did not fear them.

Silver Lance stood at the doorway of his lodge. He had thrown aside his half-civilized dress and appeared in all his Indian finery. Upon his wrists were bracelets of solid gold, which were of great value, though rudely made. Upon his head was a circlet of gold into which were set waving plumes of varied shapes and colors. A gaudy scarf was thrown over his richly-embroidered hunting-shirt, belted at the waist by a Mexican cavalry officer's sword-belt, with a rich golden buckle. His lower limbs were incased in leggins of the best buck-skin, fringed and ornamented by the hands of the women of his village, who took pride in the appearance of their chief, and not a few of whom sighed for a place in his lodge. For, if Blazing Star seemed to care little for the honor he would have conferred on her, she had many rivals who would willingly have taken her place in the affections of the chief, who, at the age of thirty-five, had no partner in his lodge.

"By heavens, a most noble-looking chief," said Senor Castelar. "I hope that our mission will not be fruitless."

"I would not put too much confidence in personal appearance," said Lieutenant De Forest, the then leader of the Texans. "If Captain Campbell were here he would tell you that this chief is one of the most furious raiders in the Comanche country."

"No doubt, no doubt," said Castelar. "But then, you must understand that these chiefs may be won by presents."

"He don't look like it, at any rate," said De Forest. "My opinion is that we shall never get your daughter without a fight. I've more faith in cold steel and in rifle-bullets than in diplomacy when you deal with Indians. I believe that if Captain Campbell were here he would tell you that our plan is far the best—to make a burst upon the village, drive out the warriors, and take our chance of finding your daughter."

"The last resort, Senor De Forest—the last resort. If we

can gain our end peacefully, we will ride back as we came, without harming a hair of an Indian head."

The escort halted, and with a celerity which would have done credit to the best cavalry force in the world, formed a double line, through which the party rode. Advancing gravely, the chief aided the senor in dismounting, and gave him the fraternal embrace much in vogue among the Comanches.

"My father is welcome," he said. "Let him enter my lodge and rest, for he is weary."

Castelar, his son and Lieutenant De Forest followed him into the tent, and twelve warriors formed a line to keep out intruders. Within the lodge was no one save the prophet and one other chief. Couches of skins had been ranged in a circle, and upon the most luxurious of these the party were seated, and the pipe of peace was lighted.

For a moment there was utter silence in the lodge, as the pipe passed from lip to lip. Imitating the stoicism of the Indians, Castelar was silent until every man in the room had drawn a few whiffs of the fragrant weed. Silver Lance was the first to speak.

"My father has come on a long journey, with many braves. We do not know whether he comes in peace or war, for his young men are of the fighting blood of the Texans, and their rifles are swift to shed the blood of the Comanche."

"We come in peace, if you will have peace," said Castelar, briefly.

"The Comanche are men of peace," said the chief, with a sly twinkle of his dark eyes; "but they are not cowards. When the blood is hot, they can strike, and strike hard. I myself have killed men in battle; you may see their scalps on the lodge-pole. I hope to slay more, for a great chief has many enemies. What seeks my father in the land of the Comanche?"

"I seek my daughter, who was taken from Chihuahua twelve years ago by your hand."

"I have taken many maidens from the children of the South. Twelve summers ago, when we came back, we brought a hundred prisoners with us. How can I tell which was your child?"

"Because the chief of the party cut down, with his own hand, the woman who led the child, and took my daughter upon the saddle before him."

"Was the woman a Mexican?"

"No; she was an American girl, the wife of my head stockman, David Carter, by name. He had hardly been married a month when his wife was killed."

"He wept for her?"

"He went mad, and plunged into the river in the darkness of the night."

"Wagh; he had a weak heart to die for a woman. There is one whom I love—the Blazing Star is her name—but I would not take my own life for her sake. Look: my hand took the girl of whom you speak, and brought her to the village. I said, 'She is beautiful, and the daughters of Mexico are more brave than the men. I will rear her up to love the Comanche, and then make her the wife of a brave.'"

Senor Castelar bounded to his feet with a cry of horror:

"Have you done this, Indian? By heavens—"

The chief raised his hand to check the words, before too much had been said.

"Let the wife of Hualpa appear," he said.

A moment more and a beautiful girl, bearing in her arms a babe scarcely a year old, stood in the center of the lodge, looking at them both with wild, questioning eyes.

"Old father," said the chief, "behold your daughter. Unda, behold your father."

CHAPTER VI.

A BIGGER LIAR THAN VERACITY.

THE Spaniard started impulsively forward and caught the shrinking form to his breast. The girl was certainly white and very beautiful, and the child in her arms was a laughing boy with the dark hair and eyes of his Andalusian sires. The Indian wife seemed startled, but not filled with the affection which stirred the heart of the Mexican grandee. How could

it be, after all these years, when she had even forgotten the language of her mother, and that mother's face?

"Indian," said the Spaniard, savagely, "by all the saints I ought to kill you where you stand, for you have dishonored my house by making my child the wife of an Indian."

"What does he say?" demanded the Indian wife. "He speaks of me, but I do not know the words."

"He would make Hualpa a dog," replied the chief. "He is angry because you are the wife of my best brave."

She drew herself up proudly, and looked at the old Spaniard with flashing eyes. She loved her husband, Indian though he was, and felt proud of his prowess in battle.

"Tell the Gray Hair for me that Unda is no longer white. She is an Indian, and the wife of a chief. What does he ask of me?—the love of a child? He shall have it, for his hair is gray. Does he ask me to go away and leave my husband and my child? No; Unda would sooner kill herself with her own hand—kill the child and him—than leave the land of her adoption and the husband of her heart."

The eyes of the chief took on a look of savage delight, for he knew that the wrath of Hualpa would be terrible if his wife was taken from him by the hands of the whites. He translated her words to Senor Castelar, who turned pale as death.

"Blessed saints! Lives there one of my blood who has learned to love the accursed Indians? I am tempted to avenge the dishonor of my race by slaying her where she stands," cried young Valdez Castelar. "Sister, hear me! We have a fair home in Chihuahua, surrounded by every thing which makes life happy. The orange groves are sweet, and the breath of roses fills the air. You would be happy there, and your mother's heart would rejoice."

The chief translated his words faithfully, and the impassioned manner of the young colonel told how much he felt what he said. But the Indian wife only looked at him with a calm, cold smile.

"Tell him that I have heard his words and am grieved to give him pain. But I can not leave my husband and child. I have spoken the words and will not take them back."

"Can this be my child?" moaned Senor Castelar. "Is it

possible that she has utterly forgotten the friends of her youth?"

"Yes," said the chief; "your child has forgotten you."

"Liar!" cried a commanding voice, as a tall figure, wearing the fantastic dress of a free trapper, forced his way into the lodge. It was our odd friend, Veracity Snodgrass.

"I don't want to tell nobody he's a liar, you understand," he said, "but I'm a man of truth myself. I never told a lie, an' I ain't goin' to 'low any one else to lie while I stand by. Stranger, *that* ain't your darter, an' I know it."

Silver Lance, with a wild yell of rage, bounded to his feet, brandishing a hatchet in his hand, while Veracity coolly brought his rifle to a level. "I don't hanker arter no man's life, you know, but I allow I'll mark you down ef you move a step. I'm Veracity Snodgrass, an' I'm a mount'in rooster. When I'm hungry I eat Injuns fer fun. I ain't hungry now, 'cause I lunched on four 'Rapahoes an' a 'Pash poppoose up hyar on the hills. You set down, Silver Lance, or I'll drive lightnin' rite thru you."

"Look at him!" shouted the chief. "He is the Great Liar of the plains. His mouth never opens unless he speaks with a forked tongue, and he dares come here to tempt a great chief of the tribe. Let him speak; I will hear the lies of a white dog."

"Senor, that ain't your gal. I've see'd this gal long afore she come hyar, an' I know where she were taken. It were down by the Rio Grande, an' her father's a stockman on Cannel Campbell's stock ranche, an' his name is Miguel Gomez. Lord love your heart, I wur thar when she war taken, myself. *Catarina Gomez* is her name."

The girl started suddenly and looked at the speaker intently, as if the name awoke old memories.

"It is a cabin by the Rio Grande," continued Veracity, fixing his eye intently upon those of the girl, and now speaking in the Mexican *patois*; a little girl, eight years old, is playing by the stream. She is chasin' butterflies and goes further and further away from the cabin. I am at the door, drinking wine with Miguel Gomez, and the mother of the little girl is watching from the door. The child chases the butterflies into a thick bush; we hear a scream from her lips,

and in a moment more we see an Indian riding across the prairies, with little Catarina at his saddle-bow. We run for our horses, but the Indian joins a hundred Comanches and rides away, and we have to cross the river to save our lives. It is a part of the band of Silver Lance, and Hualpa is the man who has stolen Catarina."

"I can see it!" cried the wife of Hualpa, speaking Mexican rapidly. "I am that child; I am Catarina Gomez!"

"Hooray fur me!" roared Veracity. "I knowed I c'u'd do it. Keep yer seat, Silver Lance, or I'll bore a hole plum thru you, sure ez you live. Senor, you'll hev to git a new deal, I reckon."

Silver Lance saw that the game was lost, and he was too good a politician to show his chagrin. By a motion of his hand he dismissed Catarina and invited the new-comer to a seat on the skins.

"Not yet, chief; send the *pipe* 'round fust an' we'll make a new deal, clear thru. I don't seem to feel safe until *that* is done."

Silver Lance, after some demur, accepted the new arrangement, and the pipe was passed.

"Now I'm one of the fam'ly," said Snodgrass, with a sly look. "Senor, I found out, no matter how, thet they was goin' to wring in a "cold deal" on you an' I couldn't stand it nohow you could fix it."

"Cold deal?"

"Put up job," was the explanation. "Lordy; don't you understand English? Make a trade—palm off Catarina on you fur your darter, so I just happened in to fix things."

"You have my thanks, brave American," said Senor Castellar. "And now, chief, what have you to say after this deceit?"

"I feared that the white men would be angry if I told them the truth."

"And what is the truth; is my child really the wife of an Indian warrior?"

Silver Lance shook his head.

"Where is she?"

"She is dead!" replied the chief. "Let the white man go back to his country and tell the mother of the child that she passed away like a spirit."

"I admire to hear you lie, Silver Lance," said Snodgrass. "Why don't you say in plain words you won't give up the gal?"

"What does the white liar mean?" hissed Silver Lance.

"I did think, one time, I could lie a few, but I give up now. I don't hold a candle to you Silver Lance. Whatever you say, you say it slick. You ar' the wust liar in seventeen counties."

"You have smoked a pipe in my lodge and I will not lift my hand against you now. Go, white men; what you seek is not for you, and I warn you to depart."

"Is my daughter dead?"

"You must search until you find her grave," said the Indian, tauntingly. "Go; I must clear my village of the accursed white men; go, before my people forget that we have smoked a pipe and slay you."

"You may as well dig out of this, gentlemen," said Snodgrass. "He won't give you no satisfaction whatsoever."

"I will remember you, liar of the white men. When we meet I will make you sorry," cried Silver Lance.

"I'm agreeable. When I wur a boy I wur skeery of Injuns, but I got over it, so to speak. I orter take an' brake you rite in two, but I dunno as I will."

"Come away, gentlemen," said De Forest. "The Indian will forget himself if you don't make haste."

"Let him remember that if, when the sun sets we are not safe in our camp, my men will chop his three chiefs into pieces no bigger than the checks on a plaid," said Castelar, gravely. "He dare not harm us for their sakes."

"The white father speaks well. He has come a long way for his daughter and he can not find her. My heart is very sad."

"Truth is lovely an' *will* prevail," said Snodgrass. "The devil loves a liar, chief. Oh, *won't* I roast you fur this ef we meet on the plains some hot day."

"I will carry your scalp on my lance, dog."

"Maybe you kin; but I don't reckon you'd better try it on 'cause you mout fail. De Forest, how ar' you?"

"Never mind making yourself known now, Snod; I've seen you before."

"Let the chief ask no question," said Silver Lance. "Is it peace or war between us, white father?"

"When I have found my child or am satisfied that she is dead I will return."

"She is dead."

"Oh, *yes*," sneered Veracity

"She is dead."

"He *will* lie, stranger; let's keep on an' trust to hard bullets an' cold steel."

The party mounted and rode forth, with the same boy leading who had showed them the way before. It was nearly sunset as they rode into camp, where they found the hostages drawn up with their arms bound and the rangers waiting only for the sun to disappear before they cut them to pieces.

"Drop it, boys!" cried De Forest, riding into the midst. "Cut their bonds for we've come back all right. Hualpa, you are at liberty to go when you will."

"Our horses," said Hualpa as the cords dropped from his hands. "We will go back and tell in the Comanche village, that the Comanche chiefs are tied like dogs, while the limbs of white men are free."

"Don't put on too much style, Hualpa," said Snodgrass. "I'd like to fetch you a lick acrost the jaws anyhow."

Hualpa looked at the speaker, and recognized a man with whom he had twice fought without much advantage to either. He smiled grimly, mounted his horse and rode away with his friends, disappearing in the mountain passes.

"Thar he goes, the born devil," said the hunter in a moralizing tone. "It beats all nature how mean a man kin be when he sets his heart on it. Get me suthin' to line my innards with; I'm hungry ez a cayote."

Buffalo-ribs were brought and Snodgrass made a mighty meal, bewailing his poor appetite as his jaws rose and fell. The rangers looked on in silent admiration at the stupendous appetite of this remarkable man.

"I never *could* eat any thing, boys," he said, in a mournful tone. "My stomach don't crave much food. I did eat a raw buffalo onc't upon a time, but you understand I hadn't eat nuthin' fer two days, an' I felt empty ez a barril. You see now how little it takes to fill me up."

As he spoke he helped himself to another rib, the fifth he had attacked since he sat down.

"Now, look hyar, you critter," said Rube Best; "don't talk like a fool. You'd create a famine in the garden' of Eden; you'd run dry the rollin' prairies of the boundless West: you would, by thunder. We don't grudge you what you eat, but, by, jinks you shaan't brag on yer small appetite, nohow."

Veracity looked up, and was about to make some rejoinder when a cry from the guards arcused them. Every man was on his feet and in the saddle in an instant; and it was time, for the dark defile which led to the village was pouring out a mighty host against them. Rank after rank they came from the defile, until five hundred gallant-looking warriors were ranged upon the plain, with Silver Lance, Hualpa and Hundo riding in full view.

"Stand firm, boys," cried De Forest. "Wait for the word and when it comes, be prompt. Pick your men before you pull trigger, and mark down three chiefs. Ready; here they come!"

And moving with the precision of veterans, their lance heads gleaming in the rays of the declining sun, the Comanches swept down to the assault.

CHAPTER VII.

BAFFLED.

WE left Ned Campbell and the Flying Scout facing each other upon the mountain plateau. A dark, red glow flushed the face of this mysterious man, and he seemed about to spring upon the young captain, but the hand of the girl was laid upon his arm.

"Be careful, David," she said quietly. "Captain Campbell is a friend; I would not have him harmed."

"Why does he spy upon me, then?" retorted the Flying

Scout. "I will not have my game blocked by him or any other man on earth, for I have given my life to the work."

"Sir," said Mountain Ned, calmly, "if you knew me better you might be sure that I would never betray any thing gained in this manner. Not that I know any thing about it, for your talk was too obscure to be of any service to me had I wished it. I only seek to satisfy myself, that you and this young lady are really friends, and that she is safe with you."

"Are you satisfied?"

"I am."

"Then go your way and leave us to go ours. I have work to do and do not wish to be interrupted."

"Snodcrass—oh—you Snodcrass!" shouted the well known voice of Jan Pliester. "Oh, Snodcrass—vere you vas?"

"Who is that?" cried the Flying Scout. "Your Dutch friend?"

"Yes; ho there, Jan—come this way."

A moment more and the white head of Jan Pliester appeared above the rocks. His face was very red, and he seemed to be laboring under strong excitement.

"What's the matter with you, Jan?" said his friend, laughing; "you look mad about something."

"I vas mat mit dot Snodcrass," replied Jan. "He vas run away mit me, unt leaf me mit mineself all alone. Vell, yoost you look mit me coople dimes. Of dot vellers not coom pack to der gamp py den mit der clock I proke his leg. I says dot mit a pig swear."

"Oh tush, Jan; where did he go?"

"He runned away mit himself, don't I tole you. He spoke mit me like dis: 'Jan Pliester, you stant pehint dot pig stone unt wait, unt pinepye pooty soon after dot I drives a deer py you unt you shoot mit der roer.' Vell—I waits, unt I waits, unt he no cooms, unt I ton't know vere der tuyvel he peen gone mit himself."

"Perhaps some accident has happened?" said Campbell anxiously.

"Probably the Dutchman is right and he has run away. Some low scout I suppose, who has fooled you into thinking that he could be faithful."

"I don't allow any man to speak in that way of one of my friends," said Ned, drawing himself up. "Snodgrass, no doubt, has good reasons for absenting himself, and I, for one, do not feel quite easy. He is a good fellow, a little inclined to stretch the truth to its utmost capacity, but not bad-hearted. I am going to look for him."

"It is useless," said the Blazing Star, exchanging glances with the Flying Scout. "I am sorry to say that your friend is, or soon will be, a prisoner in a Comanche village."

"How do you know?" demanded Fred. "This is too bad -- too bad. Tell me where he is, and I will have him out, no matter what the risk may be."

"You would do better to leave it to me," she said. "I give you my word that, in less than two days, you shall see your friend safe and well."

"If you promise that, I am contented. I suppose I must bid you good-by, for the present, but I feel a deep interest in you, and would like to become better acquainted."

"It is useless, sir. We can be nothing more to each other than we are now, for my course in life is marked out."

"I must know where you stay; I must see you at times."

"It can not be."

"I will follow you wherever you go, until I know where you lodge."

The Flying Scout laughed scornfully:

"Follow her, young man? Can you follow the mountain goat? Can you follow the antelope? Then follow us."

The two darted away suddenly, running side by side. As they ran, the scout flung over the head and shoulders of the girl a gray robe similar to the one he wore, and she made it fast about her neck and under her arms by a quick movement. Ned Campbell followed, and the two ran on before, only leading him by a few steps. They neared the precipice, down which the scout had leaped on the day when they first met Veracity Snodgrass, and the scout leaped boldly out into the air.

Blazing Star turned, laughingly kissed her hand to Campbell, and to his horror leaped from the rocks into the gulf below. Bending forward quickly, he saw the gray robe ex-

pand, as that of the scout had done, and the girl floated down like a feather into the deep ravine.

"Follow us, Captain Campbell," she cried, looking up at him. "You promised to do so, you know."

The next moment she disappeared behind the rocks, and Mountain Ned sat down on a boulder until Jan came up.

"I'll beat this game yet," said Ned, grating his teeth sharply together. "The girl is sharp, but I will outwit her or know the reason why."

"You can't do it, Ned; dey vas too schmart, dem two. I nefer sees such a t'ing ash dot vile I lifes. Dey fly like birds down ter rocks."

"Let them go for the present, Jan. Now, a word in your ear, my boy. I have found what we came for—gold!"

"Dot vas a pig mistake, I dinks."

"What do you call that?"

He poured into the open palm of the Dutchman a little of the dust which he had taken from the bed of the creek. The fellow uttered a perfect war-whoop of delight, for he knew gold-dust well.

"Yoost coom away mit me," he roared. "Ven I digs mine-self rich, I gone home unt marries Gretchen unt makes mine-self a shentlemans again; you coom away."

The two descended the mountain cautiously, and after an hour's walk, reached their camp. Every thing was as it had been left, and the Dutchman leaped into the water and scooped up a calabashful of the shining sand, and began to wash it with the skill of an old miner. The stolid expression was gone, and in its place the intelligence of the keen gold-hunter. Such is the influence of the yellow metal, which has been a power in the earth since first men bought and sold.

Ned Campbell, while he smiled at this eagerness aided Jan to the best of his ability, when, turning his eyes above, he saw sailing through the air a small paper balloon, which, even while they gazed, exploded with a loud crash, and burst into flame.

"Hurrah," he cried, throwing down the calabash. "The rangers are come, so good-by gold, and hurrah for the clash of steel and the rattle of rifles!"

"Vat ish de madder mit you?" demanded the Dutchman.

"Matter! Do you see that balloon burning above us? Man alive, that tells me that my gallant rangers are out yonder and waiting for me."

"Vat off dot?"

"I'm going to join them at once."

The man suspended his work and looked at the speaker in silent wonder.

"I ton't know off I vas awake or aschleen, Mynheer Campbell. Do you dole me dot you vas leaf dis gelt unt go mit dem fighting mans?"

"Yes; all the gold of the West woud not hold me, for I have given my word. Do you come with me?"

"Nix; you go mit yourself unt fight, v'ile I stay here unt tig gelt. Vell, I ton't ask half der fighting; but, off you cooms pack I gifs you half der gelt."

"Have your own way, Jan," said Campbell. "I'm off now, but, before we leave the Comanche country I agree to give you a call. And if you haven't got more gold than we can lift, we'll 'tote' you back to the Brazos."

"Dot vas goot," exclaimed Jan Pliester. "Vell I stay here unt make gelt vile you gone oud mit dem fighters. I nefer fights ven I can make gelt mit oud."

"That is good, safe doctrine, my boy," laughed Campbell, as he tightened his belt preparatory to a forced march. "However, 'he who fights and runs away, may live to fight another day;' but, if my Brazos boys can't whip five times their number of howling Comanches, may I never again draw a bead on an enemy. Good-by, old boy, and keep as close as you can. I would not use the roer any more than I could help, because the Comanches might think it is a mountain howitzer and run off the game we want. There is enough jerked venison to last you three weeks and our work will be done, long before that, I assure you."

Long habit had made Mountain Ned the equal of the Indian on the trail, and he passed on rapidly until, just at sunset, he reached a slope which overlooked the prairie and saw far out on the plain, the camp of the rangers.

"Your men, Captain Campbell?" demanded a musical

voice at his elbow. He turned in surprise, and saw Blazing Star, still habited in the gray garment which had been thrown over her shoulders by the Flying Scout. She smiled slightly as the look of astonishment passed over the face of the mountain man.

"I come and go strangely, captain," she said. "Think nothing of that, for I am a woman of mystery like my friend, the Flying Scout. You were surprised at our sudden disappearance this morning."

"I don't understand this jumping down cliffs a hundred feet high," replied Ned, in rather a sulky tone. "I thought you had dashed yourself to pieces. Will you allow me to examine that cloak?"

"Certainly."

He looked at it closely and saw that it was really what it seemed—a cloak of strong gray cloth. More than this he had no time to observe, for at that moment the peculiar Indian yell arose in the pass below.

"If you were going back to your men, Captain Campbell," said the Blazing Star, "you will have to wait, for there is Silver Lance and all his men."

"The—excuse me; I ought to be with my men, and there they are about to fight, and here I am treed like a coon. There they go into the saddle—hurrah! There is Old Rube and De Forest ready and eager for the fight. There's that Greaser colonel, too—that's he in the gay uniform, and I'll bet ten ounces he can fight; he's got the old Spanish blood in his veins."

"What is his name?" demanded the Blazing Star, turning quickly upon him.

"Castelar; his father was once Governor of Chihuahua. There is the old man, brave old Don, with his sword in his hand. He is in the Comanche country in search of his child, who was stolen by Silver Lance, years and years ago."

He was watching the movements of the troops so intently that he did not notice the sudden start with which the girl heard the name, or the strange look which she bent upon the old man riding so gallantly in the van of the rangers. Suddenly the charging yell of the Comanches was heard and the

forest of lances moved rapidly across the plain. Then the stern command of De Forest was distinctly heard:

“Give it to them!”

A terribly destructive fire was poured in which made great gaps in the advancing ranks of the Indians, but did not stop them. Closing up with deafening yells they came on boldly to the attack. Now was seen the most desperate sight in all warfare—a Texan charge! Slinging their rifles, a pistol in each hand, the bowie between the teeth, and the rein dangling free, while their trained horses obeyed the touch of the knee, these gallant men came on, down upon the long row of lances!

There was something so fierce, so utterly devoid of fear, in the Texan advance, that the bravest among the Indians trembled, until roused to action by the war-cry of Silver Lance as he thrust his long spear through the bosom of a Texan in the foremost rank and hurled him out of the saddle, a corpse before he touched the earth. A moment more and the lances were brushed aside by the strong charge of the Texan horsemen, and the pistols at close quarters began their deadly work.

Silver Lance was ubiquitous. He moved along the front, striking down every man who opposed him, until his lance-head was cut away from the shaft by a sweeping blow from the saber of the young Mexican colonel, who bore himself like a man. Then the Indians, obeying the command of their chief, broke up suddenly and took position in the mouth of the pass where they prepared to make a new Thermopylæ in defense of their mountain home.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE COMANCHE WOOER.

“HURRAH for the Brazos boys!” cried Campbell, showing himself on the crest of the rocks, and sending the ringing tones of his voice across the plain. “Halt them, De Forest; give the lads a breathing spell.”

The Texans heard the voice, and a great cheer went up as they saw the tall form of their leader standing on the bare brown rocks looking down at them. Silver Lance saw him too, and shook his clenched hand at the immovable figure above him, and uttered a fierce shout of defiance, which was answered by as loud a cry from the lips of Mountain Ned.

A hasty movement was seen among the Indians, and Hualpa with ten picked men began the ascent of the rocks. It was plainly to be seen that they had been sent to cut off Captain Campbell. At the same moment a small party of Texans, led by Old Rube, dashed rapidly to the right to give the captain a chance to join them. Leaving their horses at the base of the rocks they began the ascent, moving as rapidly as they could over the broken ground. Among them was Veracity Snodgrass who had fought gallantly throughout the fray and was as forward as any in the attack.

Captain Campbell stood alone upon the rocks, for, as soon as he had showed himself to the rangers, Blazing Star disappeared as suddenly as if she had sunk into the earth. He prepared his rifle and took a shot at Hualpa, whom he missed by an inch. But, the bullet had its mission, for it was buried in the brain of a stalwart brave who was clambering up the rocks behind the chief. Loading his rifle again Campbell bounded back among the rocks just as the Indians began to reach the platform. Hualpa, who knew the desperate character of the enemy with whom he had to deal, waited until all his men had made the ascent before he advanced to the place where Campbell, who knew that flight was useless, stood at bay between two giant boulders, the lower part of his body screened by a rock which rose above his waist. Upon this rock lay his pistols, hatchet, and knife, and his deadly rifle was in his hands.

"I may be killed," he muttered, "but I can't die without company. Come on, you painted hounds!" he yelled. "Come and I will give the mountain wolves a banquet. Hurrah for the Lone Star of Texas; hurrah, for the boys of the Brazos!"

A loaded rifle in the hands of a determined man is a terrible weapon, and the Indians knew enough of the cool hardi-

hood of their foe to be certain that one of them must die if they advanced a step. Even Hualpa hesitated, for the bold eyes seemed to follow *his* movements especially. While they paused in doubt they heard the cheer of the party led by Rube Best, and with a cry of rage, Hualpa bounded on. The cry was stopped by a bullet; the fierce heart had ceased to beat and the daughter of Miguel Gomez was a widow. Then Rube Best and his gallant men burst in, Campbell took the lead and the small party of Indians were literally swept from the rocks into the gulf below before their deadly weapons, and the white party stood triumphant on the hill.

"My scalp," cried Rube Best, pointing to the dead form of Hualpa. "You don't want it, Cap?"

"No," replied Campbell. "I never take scalps, as you know. But, while bounties are paid for them and the Indians take scalps themselves I don't blame the boys. Hurry up, though, for I want to join the rest."

The work was quickly done and they turned to go.

"Now, whar is that critter Snodgrass," demanded Rube Best. "Durn him, *he* ain't sneaked, I hope. He fit like all possessed down thar on the plains."

"I see him just afore we run in to help the Cap," said one of the men. "I dunno whar he's gone now."

They called him but only the rocks echoed back the cry. Snodgrass did not come back and they hurried away, for a hundred Indians were clambering the rocks to avenge their slaughtered friends. But, when they reached the platform they only found the dead bodies of their friends, for the rangers were out of their reach. Ten minutes after they might have been seen riding out to join the Texans, Captain Campbell riding in the saddle lately occupied by Veracity Snodgrass who had disappeared in so mysterious a manner. Campbell was warmly received by the rangers and De Forest gladly turned over the command to him.

"I don't like to take the men from you, Jimmy," said Campbell. "I've seen many a fight but never a one more bravely led than that. Colonel Castelar, if all your countrymen fought as you and your father fought to-day, Indians would not ride through Mexico as they have done nor would you be here in search of a lost daughter and sister."

"I know my countrymen," replied Senor Castelar, "and if they have a virtue it is not the virtue of bravery. How much unlike the unconquering race from which they sprung is the race which rules Mexico to-day. I am not proud of the record, Captain Campbell, but I am glad that my son and myself have been able to do our duty in this trying hour. Shall you assail the Indians at once?"

"They are strongly posted and nearly half of them have fire-arms. It will be a hard job to drive them out, the harder on account of their lances. In a narrow pass, with men who know how to use them, lances and pikes are hard weapons to deal with."

"What shall you do?"

"I propose to flank them," replied Campbell. "I know a pass which will bring us nearly two miles in their rear, and if we can reach it without their knowledge, we shall have them in a trap. But I shall not move to-night—unless we are attacked. It is getting dark now and we must make preparations for defense. For, if I know any thing of the man who leads those Indians, we shall have an attack to-night which will put us to our best devices."

He called De Forest, Best, and three or four more of the chief men among the Texans about him, and they held a consultation of some length. Their plans being made up, they set to work carrying them out.

Meantime, in the pass, the Indians were wailing over their slaughtered friends, and making preparations to send them to the village, where they might be buried. No man ever grieved over a friend as Silver Lance did over the dead form of Hualpa. They were David and Jonathan, and in losing him, Silver Lance had lost his right hand.

"Noble thou wert, oh Hualpa," he murmured. "The swift foot, the strong arm, the brave heart are no more. Happy art thou, oh Hualpa, in the land to which thou art going. Light a fire, oh, my brothers, that the feet of our brave Hualpa may not wander alone in the darkness. I will cover my face for my heart is very sad."

He covered his face with a blanket and sat down in the shadow of the rocks.

As he sat there, a form stole into the camp—a form which

they all knew as that of the Blazing Star. She advanced quietly and laid her hand upon the shoulder of the mourning chief, who started up as he felt the soft pressure on his arm, and dropped the blanket.

"Does the chief mourn for the dead?" she said, softly. "Does he not know that the dead are at rest, and happier than we can ever be in this great changing world? Yes, chief, though we lay Hualpa beneath the sod, we know that he is not here, but on his way to the silent land far beyond the shining river."

"Blazing Star speaks words of comfort, and the heart of the chief is more at rest. I loved Hualpa well; he has lived with me from boyhood; we slept in the same blanket, and on our first hunt, made a camp together. When we went on the war-trail into Mexico, Hualpa was still at my side. He saved my life thrice; I saved his as many. Accursed be the hand which has taken the life of my friend. When Campbell crosses my path, it is he or I who must die."

"Let Hualpa rest, and think of the living, chief. I have had a vision of evil to the great tribe of the Comanches. A spirit has spoken to me from the clouds and told me to speak to Silver Lance. Evil is before you, if you do not make peace with the white men."

"Do you know what they seek?"

"I have heard; why do you not give the old man his child?"

"I would have given him Unda, but she loved Hualpa and would not go."

"Is Unda the child of the Gray Hair of Mexico?"

"Why should I lie to the Blazing Star? Unda is not the child of the white man yonder, but I told the white man this, though I spoke with a double tongue. I knew that Unda would not leave her husband, and we would not lose her; but a white man came who gave me the lie in my teeth, and told them that Unda came from Texas."

"That was bad; you hate this white man?"

"I will have his scalp before three moons go by. A dog of the white men shall never laugh in the face of a Comanche chief."

"Will you give the white man his child, and have peace?"

"Where is she?" cried the chief, turning a dark look upon the girl. "Will the Blazing Star tell me where she is to be found?"

"Then Silver Lance does not know where she is?"

"She is—dead."

He looked at her furtively, as if to fathom her thoughts, but the face was impenetrable in its composure. She evidently did not suspect him.

"Will Silver Lance fight the white men?"

"Will the wind blow, will the moon ride through the sky at night? Before morning breaks, every white man yonder will be dead or a prisoner. I have made a vow, and it will not be broken."

"Then let the Comanche wait for the evil to come. I see graves in all the valley, from end to end."

"Do the stars say that Silver Lance will die?"

"It is written there."

"Then Silver Lance laughs at the stars and at you. Keep your prophecies for one who fears them, but tell them not to me. A lying spirit has whispered in the ear of the Blazing Star. The Flying Man of the Hills has told you this."

"The Flying Man is a prophet."

"It is good; he is the prophet of the pale-faced strangers and not of the Comanches. Minnitash is the prophet of my nation; let us listen to his words. Has Blazing Star turned traitor to the nation?"

He grasped her suddenly by the arm and looked into her face.

"Girl, my people have loved you, and I, their chief, would have given my life for your sake. I loved you from a little child—I love you now—but I will kill you if you betray my people."

"When was I false to the tribe?" she replied, undaunted by his manner.

"I do not know, but your words are cold when you speak of the Comanche, and I fear that you no longer love them. Prove that I am wrong; be the wife of my bosom, and make my lodge-fire bright. If you do this, you can prove that you are a true daughter of the great nation, and that you love them."

The girl hesitated. She knew that any refusal on her part would be accepted by the chief as a sign that she was no longer a friend of the tribe, but sided with its enemies. As he stood there with the strong glare of the fire falling on his face, she read in it an indomitable purpose which nothing could check or turn aside.

"You hesitate," he said grimly. "You find it hard to become the wife of a great chief. Have you looked on the face of a white warrior which you have learned to love?"

"No, no," she cried, averting her head as she spoke. "But you are too sudden; I must have time to think."

"You have had years for thought. Decide now for the last time."

"Beware lest you force me too hard, Silver Lance. If I had loved you, the way in which you speak to me might well make me your enemy."

"I have waited long," replied the chief softly. "Since you were a little child as high as that—" he placed his hand about the region of his heart, "I have kept your image in my breast. No one could love you better, no one could feel more tenderly toward you than I do. Will you give yourself to me and make the heart of a chief glad?"

"Not now; you must give me time to think. In three days you may have my answer, but not before."

He dropped his hand, and a fierce light came into his face for he could see in his jealous wrath that she would do anything to put him off.

"I give you one more chance and only one. The lodge of Silver Lance is large, but his heart is large. There is room in it for the Blazing Star to rest in peace. Put your hand in mine and say that you will walk with me through the journey of life."

"I will not."

"Then you are no longer free, but a prisoner of Silver Lance and he will treat you as he would any captive Mexican girl from the South. Hundo, come hither."

"Wait!" cried the Blazing Star. "What would you do?"

"I would make you safe, mad girl. Hundo, take the Blazing Star to the village and keep her safe until I come."

The subordinate chief advanced and caught the Blazing

Star by the arms. In an instant her hands were bound behind her, and she was led away through the dark pass by means of a lariat bound tightly to her waist. She followed him without a word, while the chief turned back to wreak his vengeance upon the white men encamped upon the prairie.

CHAPTER IX.

KNIFE TO LANCE.

THE night was dark and gloomy—great clouds rolling up in the sky obscuring the face of the moon. A solemn stillness fell upon plain and mountain, the precursor of the coming storm. In the pass the Indians gathered, but their white foes lay sleeping on the prairie, apparently unconscious of their danger. Their camp-fire glowed, and everything showed that they did not intend to move as yet.

Scouts stole out to reconnoiter and bring back word that the enemy slept, posting no more than half a dozen guards, and that even these seemed to be drowsy. A savage light showed itself in the face of the red chief. Vengeance would be his, he would crush these audacious intruders and then—the Blazing Star would be his!

Slowly and cautiously, in single file, they passed out into the darkness, and formed upon the plain within five hundred yards of the sleeping camp. Not a sound was heard. The immovable figures of the sentinels could be seen, leaning on their rifles, apparently devoid of fear. A touch passed down the ranks and every man was in the saddle, and then, as the signal-yell pealed from the lips of Silver Lance, a series of deafening war-cries rung through the silent night. The sentries went down without firing a shot, and the band poured into camp, spearing the prostrate figures about the fires.

What is this? The blankets are empty, and they see that the overthrown sentries are men of straw, made up to fool them! Silver Lance knows that he is in the trap, but, before he can form his men, the well known battle-shout of the

Texans is heard and the rifles begin to shatter their ranks. Then comes the charge, the pistols and silent but deadly bowie doing fearful work. Down they go, man by man, as the mounted rangers charge through them in a double rank, cutting right and left as they ride.

"Ready, about!" cried the voice of Mountain Ned. "Through them again, my lads; once more for the Lone Star. Give it to them."

They dash back, but the Indians are not ready for another charge. They break and fly in confusion, and the dark pass swallows them up, leaving the Texans conquerors. Their triumphant cheers grate upon the ears of Silver Lance as he is borne away in the flight of his men unable to turn. He had sought in vain in that wild struggle to get a blow at Ned Campbell, but fate had kept them asunder. On they went into the pass, where they turned like wounded lions, threatening their pursuers. But, how their hearts sunk when they saw the fearful gaps which the struggle had left in their ranks.

At least one-third of their number were wounded or slain, and they knew too well that the fierce rangers seldom spared a wounded Indian.

Beaten again, and by Ned Campbell of all men! Had he not said to Blazing Star that he would conquer Ned Campbell, and hang his scalp in his lodge? And here, in their first meeting, he had been defeated with terrible loss. As he stood beside his wounded horse at the mouth of the pass, a party of five warriors came before him.

"Chief," they said through their spokesman. "The Maniton is angry with his red children. We have robbed a father of the child whom he loves and when that father comes, seeking his child, we laugh him to scorn. Shall not this old father have his child and the nation peace?"

"Would you make me a dog?" hissed Silver Lance. "Are you the leaders of Comanche braves or papposes escaped from the Pi-Utes? How many brave men lie on the plain yonder who have fallen? Shall we let them rot and not avenge them?"

"I speak for the rest," replied the leader of the deputation. "What the chief says is our law. If he would have us go out and fight again with the Texans we are ready

But, why should we throw away our lives in fighting with the Texan Bravo, and the men he leads?"

"Is there a man among you who can say where the daughter of the Spaniard is?"

They hesitated, for, if the truth must be told, not a man among the tribe, save Minnitash, who knew every thing, could be certain which, among their many white prisoners, was the lost daughter of the house of Castelar. Numerous changes had been made; some had been exchanged captives with the braves of other villages.

He noted their dilemma and smiled in his grim contemptuous way.

"Am I more of a spirit than you, my brothers, that I should know? Let us fight the white men when they come as best we can, and if our strength fails, we can get help. Listen, Bah-ton-est-tah. Ride hard to the village of Custodin, and give this token."

He laid a small silver amulet in the hand of the warrior.

"Say to him 'Silver Lance sends you this and bids you by the sign which it conveys, come with all your warriors and those of Cabanis to the feast of blood.'"

Bah-ton-est-ah looked at the sign and exchanged a glance of intelligence with his chief. He had passed through the first degrees of the mystic science of which the symbol spoke, Freemasonry. And, strange as it may seem, uneducated as the Indians may be, their system of Masonry is beautiful, and they recognize in a white brother a friend, no matter where he is met. They hold their "lodges" at stated periods, and from far and near they come and are initiated with more form and ceremony than their white Brothers of the Mystic Tie. Silver Lance in sending the token to his friend knew that he could not call for aid in vain, and the envoy, concealing the token about his person, mounted and rode away at a furious pace.

"Look, children of the Comanche," cried the chief; "I have sent to Custodin and he will come with Cabanis and a thousand warriors. Woe to the white men then! As for us, we will keep this pass against them while life remains. We are not dogs to give up to white men because some of our brave men have fallen."

The warriors responded by guttural cheers. Their spirits were not broken and they were ready for the fight whenever their chief chose to lead them on. Their shouts were heard in the camp of the rangers, ringing through the night.

"The skunks ain't got enuff yit, Cap," said Rube Best, who was employed in stringing a number of scalps—a business he performed as coolly as if they were beaver pelts. "We'll hev to give 'em another turn, sure."

"We will stay by them until we get the Governor's daughter," said Campbell. "But we are likely to be imposed on again, the cursed Indians have got so many Mexican girls prisoners among them, and we don't know which is the daughter of Castelar."

"If the chief dares to play me false again I will kill him, even in the midst of his lodge," said Valdez Castelar. "Why need we hesitate? Why not advance at once and flank the Indians before they send for help?"

"I am ready as soon as the men are," replied Campbell. "What is it, Tracey?"

One of the men had come up and seemed desirous of speaking.

"An Indian girl out here wants to come into camp."

"An Indian girl? Did she give any name?"

"The Blazing Star."

"Let her come at once," cried Campbell. "I was afraid she might be in danger from the Comanche."

A moment more and Blazing Star stood before them.

"You are welcome to my camp," said Mountain Ned.

"May I ask why you have come to me?"

"Do you mean to attack the Indians in the pass?"

The leaders, who had gathered about her with looks of admiration, thought this a strange question, coming from an Indian girl.

"Do not fear to answer," she said, drawing her slight form up proudly. "Blazing Star would not do a treacherous or mean act to save her life; but if you can not trust me, I will go."

She turned quickly, but Campbell stopped her.

"I did not hesitate on my own account," he said; "but you must understand that, while I would trust you in any

thing, my friends do not know you. But I can say, as you have said, that nothing would induce you to betray a friend. We do not intend to attack them, but rather to flank them by the south pass."

"You must change your plans in a measure. It is a good rule not to bar the way of a fighting enemy, and if you cut them off from the village, they will fight like rats in a trap. Listen: when you see three lights burning on the top of yonder rock, form your men on foot and attack the Indians in the mouth of the pass. I promise you that half an hour later there shall be no Indian in the pass, and you may march safely out into the plain."

"Do you give me your word of honor that this is true?"

"Yes."

"Is the Flying Scout in it?"

"He is."

"Then I am your man. You may go with the assurance that I will carry out your plans to the letter, as far as I am concerned. Be careful of yourself."

"I am no longer friendly with Silver Lance. He sent me a prisoner to the village, three hours ago, but I managed to escape from his guard. Remember my orders, and attack them the moment you see the three green lights gleaming on the rock."

"Shall I not send some one with you? Are you not afraid to go alone?"

"Nonsense, captain. I have roamed these hills too long for that. Is this the gentleman who is looking for his lost child, captain?"

"This is Senor Castelar"

"I am sorry for you," she said, frankly, turning to him—"really and truly sorry. I have a message for you from one you once knew, but whose name I can not repeat even to you."

"What is the message?"

"*Hope!*" A good time is at hand, when the one you love shall be given to your arms."

"Can you not tell me the person's name?"

"No; that is forbidden. Regard it as a message from the grave, but believe in it. Esperanza! Watch for the signals, and be prompt."

She added a few hurried directions to Campbell, speaking in a tone which they could not hear, and then sprung away in the darkness, leaving the leaders spell-bound by the majesty of her presence, and the tender, sweet tones of her voice.

"I would give ten years from a life which can not be long, if that brave, sweet girl were my lost daughter," said Senor Castelar. "She is one I could welcome, unspoiled by her life with these savage tribes—a true child of nature, with a woman's heart. Trust her! Her voice is so tender and true that any one must believe her honest. How long will it be before we get the signal?"

"Perhaps half an hour," replied Campbell. "It will take nearly that time for her to reach the crest of the rocks. Lieutenant De Forest, you will form the men for a foot-charge, sending out skirmishers forty yards in advance. Upon the first shot from the enemy, let every man take care of himself, with the understanding that I wish them to get into the shelter of those scattered boulders, and drive the enemy from among them as soon as possible."

They waited half an hour with their eyes fixed on the distant cliffs. Suddenly, without warning, three green lights flared out for a moment upon the summit of the cliff, and were gone.

"Forward!" whispered Campbell, and the rangers began the advance, moving on cautiously in the gloom.

CHAPTER X.

THE RAIN OF FIRE.

SILVER LANCE was astounded, soon after the emissary had been dispatched to the friendly chief, by the return of Hundo, to whom had been confided the care of Blazing Star. The face of the young brave was downcast, and he seemed afraid to face his chief.

"Come to me, Hundo," cried Silver Lance. "You have lost her again, have you not?"

The young chief hesitated and did not speak. Silver Lance quietly drew a hatchet from his belt, and looked in the eyes of Hundo. Knowing his danger, the man held his ground firmly, and now, for the first time, spoke boldly.

"Hundo has done what he could. Let the chief strike."

Silver Lance hesitated, and finally returned the hatchet to his belt.

"Hundo can speak; if he has been to blame, the hatchet can be drawn."

"She is gone," replied Hundo. "It grieved me to see Blazing Star bound like an enemy, and I loosened the cords on her wrists. I forgot that she had a knife in her belt and that her hands were small. The pass was dark, and in the darkest part, I heard her laugh, as she leaped up the mountain-side, telling me to say good-by to Silver Lance. If I have done wrong, kill me, for I am ready to die. I chased her in the mountains, but who is so fleet of foot as Blazing Star? I came back to you, and you may do your will. Hundo is ready to die if it is the will of the Great Spirit."

"Hundo is free," replied the chief as he returned his hatchet to his belt. "There is no wrong in his heart; Blazing Star shall be taken, and when she is ours again I will teach her what it is to betray the great tribe. Look; the lights on the mountain! What are they?"

Three green lights had gleamed for a moment before them and were gone from their sight. Ten minutes later a dropping irregular fire ran along the front, and they knew that the whites had commenced an attack. Silver Lance rushed to the front and bent his efforts to the work of driving back the assailing force. Back they went for a moment, and seemed to melt into the earth, but a flash of fire from the prairie whenever a tufted head appeared, showed that they were creeping up in the form of a semicircle, drawing their lines closer and closer. Half an hour later and shots from the flanks among the boulders showed that they were in new danger, and obeying the commands of their chief they fell back still further to a place where the pass entirely screened them from attacks on the flanks.

"Stand firm, men of the great tribe!" shouted the gallant chief. "We will not yield a step further while a man remains to lift a rifle or wield a lance. Remember that you fight for the best hope of the Comanche, for the women and little children. You fight for vengeance, too, and let that make you strong of heart."

For some reason the fire of the assailing party slackened the moment they had succeeded in driving the Indians into the pass. There was a lull in the attack, only an occasional dropping shot from some ambitious marksman, who fancied that he saw an opportunity for a crack shot. One by one even these shots ceased and an utter silence prevailed. But, Silver Lance was not lulled into the belief that the whites had given up the attack; on the contrary this silence was ominous, and aroused him to renewed watchfulness and activity.

"The white dogs have fled," cried Hundo. "Let us rush out and pursue them over the prairie."

"They have not fled, Hundo," replied Silver Lance; "they only wait their chance like skillful warriors, for they know that it will not be easy to drive us out of this pass. Keep your weapons ready, and in time they will come."

But they waited nearly half an hour, and nothing was heard from the rangers, who maintained a deathlike silence. A cry from one of the Indians called the attention of the chief, and he saw the brave pointing at a strange fire which had sprung up suddenly upon the cliff above their heads. At first it was green and threw a peculiar glare upon the scene, revealing every form in the pass, and even the crouching figures of some of the rangers on the plain beyond. But these quickly concealed themselves behind the bowlders and waited for the event. The glare changed from green to yellow, from yellow to blue, and finally settled down into a steady blood-red gleam.

The superstitious Indians, trembling in every limb, looked up the mountain side, and not a man among them moved hand or foot. They saw in this something supernatural—something which was the work of a powerful spirit directed against them. There was a sulphurous taint upon the air, and the savages began to look behind them, when some dark

object came rushing down the mountain side, spitting fire as it came, and exploded in their very midst, spreading death on every hand. The Indians would have fled, but, as the crowd surged back, down the pass, one of these strange globes fell in their path and forced them back.

It was a moment of utter confusion and dismay, a moment never to be forgotten in the history of the Comanche nation. Smaller globes of the same nature, followed by a train of sparks, hissed down upon them. The destruction was terrible, hemmed as they were into the narrow pass, and even Silver Lance, brave as he undoubtedly was, lost heart for a moment and began to look about him for some avenue of escape.

In the midst of the pandemonium of yells, groans and curses, the gigantic form of the Flying Scout was seen upon the lofty rock, fully revealed in the sulphurous glare, holding in each hand one of the globes they so much dreaded, which he hurled first with the right hand and then with the left, with marvelous precision and force. This was too much. The Indians dreaded this remarkable man beyond measure, and it only needed a sight at him to complete their dismay. Nothing was now thought of save flight, no matter how; any thing, anywhere, to take them out of the reach of the destroyer of their race. Those who could get to their horses mounted and dashed away at headlong speed, and Silver Lance was borne away in the torrent. The fiery rain continued as they fled.

"Go, cowards!" screamed the Flying Scout. "I am coming; I will meet you, fly where you will!"

As he spoke he hurled the last globe and darted away. At the same moment the white rangers charged up the pass, for they saw the solitary yellow light which warned them to advance, gleaming upon a lofty cliff. They dashed on with rifles ready, but paused in utter wonder as they reached the pass and saw the dreadful destruction which had been wrought by the fiery globes hurled by the vindictive hand of the dark being known as the Flying Scout. They were men to whom the sight of blood was familiar, who had faced death in many shapes, but never had they seen it in this form. Over fifty of the Comanche band, either dead or desperately wounded, lay upon the rocky floor of the pass. They had fallen in every conceivable position, and their gore had

sprinkled the rocks about them until it seemed a very slaughter-pen.

"Ger-cat Julius Cæsar!" gasped Rube Best, as he dropped the butt of his rifle upon the earth and looked at the scene by the light of the still blazing fire upon the hill. "This licks my cats all to pieces. Cap—you don't ask me to believe that this is all one man's work?"

"Not only that, but you have not seen the whole of it, by any means," said Campbell. "Probably Silver Lance had nearly four hundred men left, and if so many have been killed by the shells, at least twice that number have gone away wounded. This Flying Scout is no Myth, boys; he is a veritable character, and as you see—a terrible one."

"Bet yer eternal life on it. Boys, when I want to pick out an inimy I'd like to tackle I'll bet money it won't be the Flying Scout. Ain't he jest pizen, though; ain't he a true bred roarer? I never see the beat."

"Shall we follow?" said De Forest. "The men are impatient to get on and have another hack at the miscreants. They say that now is the time to pitch in when they are half frightened to death."

"Wait," said Campbell. "This beautiful girl has left me a code of signals and as they have worked so well so far I don't see why we should not follow them still. When I see the light we will advance, and not before."

"Then I reckon we'd better go a wool-gatherin'," said Rube Best, as he drew his bowie. "Thunder; what a time I'll hev in Chewawa (Chihuahua) when we go back. O, gal-ory!"

Most of the rangers plunged into the horrible work with infinite zest, but a few remained by the Mexicans and other leaders. It might have been half an hour later when a blue light was seen upon a rock nearly a mile ahead.

"What does that mean?" demanded De Forest.

"Advance at a footpace with the horses," replied Campbell. By this time the horse-guards had brought up the animals, grumbling that they had no chance to get any scalps. They became better natured when the Mexicans promised to make the loss good to them, and the party rode on slowly in the direction of the gleaming light. Now and then a

ranger would quietly slip from saddle and secure a scalp when the command passed the dead form of a Comanche. At last they reached a place, directly under the cliff upon which stood the blue light now burning but faintly, and dropping sparks like a piece of fireworks, and Campbell called them to a halt.

"Another wait?" said De Forest.

"Yes; my signal is not burning."

"You put a great deal of faith in this girl."

"Certainly I do; has she not given us good reason to trust her?"

"I can't deny that you are right, old man. But, see here; I'm afraid you are booked through, this trip. I never knew you to put much faith in what a woman told you before."

"They are 'desprut unsartin,' as Josh Phelps used to say," was the laughing reply of the young Texan, "and some of them are of all things deceitful and desperately wicked. But, I'd trust this girl with my life if it were necessary, and she would not go back on me either."

"There's a light!" cried a ranger, who had ridden a little in advance.

"What color?" shouted Campbell, eagerly.

"Red, green and blue in a triangle," replied the man.

"That's it," was the response of the captain. "Advance at a gallop!"

A stunning cheer broke from the delighted rangers, who were tired of the snail's pace of the last half-hour. The horses feeling the spurs leaped forward like grayhounds released from the leash. It was a wild scramble, a delicious hurly-burly, which should be first in at the death. A fox-chase; a boar-hunt—only the game was human, though savage. Both the Mexican gentlemen rode gallantly as all Mexicans do, and barely five minutes had passed when they were under the colored lights which gleamed above them like stars.

"These signals are really wonderful," said Senor Valdez Castelar, as he rode on, by Campbell's side. "They must have anticipated our coming and the course we would take, but how could they be sure that the Texans would whip the Indians?"

"Bah; they knew the Texans," was the reply. "Keep

up the pace boys. The ground is as level as a ball-room floor. Hark! By heavens, the Flying Scout is at them again with his shells!"

As he spoke they heard the first explosion which announced that the Indians had again found a lion in the path. Without slackening their pace they dashed on and met the Indians pouring out of the pass in wild confusion, urging their horses with knife, hatchet and broken lances to get out of the way of danger. Knowing the course they must take the Scout had reached it before them, and the first notice they had of his presence was a hand grenade hurled among them in the narrowest part of the pass. If they had doubted in the least the supernatural character of the Scout, it would have been rank heresy to doubt it now. To turn and fly was the first thought with the greater portion, although a party of perhaps seventy-five, following the lead of Silver Lance, rode on down the pass and made their escape. Silver Lance bore a charmed life, for not one of the flying fragments had touched him throughout that dreadful night. Those who turned back cared nothing for the rangers; indeed, they did not dream that the whites were pursuing so closely until they met face to face and the matchless weapons began to play upon them. Every thing like order was forgotten then, and without a show of resistance they were cut down or escaped by clambering up the rocks on either side. Many a pitiless Comanche massacre, many a bloody raid was avenged that night.

A torch gleamed above them, and by its light they saw the Flying Scout looking down at them.

"Hurrah for the 'Texas boys!'" he shouted. "Cheer for the gallant lads of the Brazos."

"Three times three for the Flying Scout!" yelled Rube Best. "Old boy, come down hyar, an' I'll gev' ye the durned-est b'ar-hug you ever hearn tell of."

"Not yet," replied the Flying Scout. "Our work is but half-done if we delay. Ride hard for the Comanche village, where Silver Lance has fled with only seventy warriors. Assail them, and take all the women prisoners you can, and you may make what terms you will with them."

"Will you go with us?" cried Campbell.

"I must do my work alone," replied the Scout. "The moon is rising and will guide you to the village. Keep it always over the right shoulder as you go, and ride hard."

The rangers, under the lead of their captain, rode on at a reckless pace, and the Flying Scout looked after them, with a sad light in his eyes.

"My vengeance is nearly sated; now to find Alecta and to finish the work so well begun."

As he spoke, ten Indians, who had escaped by climbing the rocks, rushed upon him from behind and cut him off from the cliff. Their eyes shone with murderous fire, for the Flying Scout was in their power!

CHAPTER XI.

THE SCOUT'S DEFENSE.

He stood facing them with that inscrutable smile upon his dark face—a smile of mingled hate and derision. It was evident that, in spite of his danger, he had little or no fear of them; yet they were desperate men, resolved to sell their lives, if need be, for the good of the tribe. They saw before them the author of all their woes, the hated Flying Man of the Hills, by whose means their village had been so woefully decimated during the last twenty-four hours.

"We have come to slay you, Flying Man," said one of the Indians, as he bared his gleaming and long knife. "The great tribe is awake and calls for your blood."

"Ten Indians!" was the scornful reply, as the black eyes of the scout took in the entire party at a glance. "Do I fear *ten* Comanche braves?"

"You have need to fear them, white dog. You will kill some of us, it may be, but the rest will kill you or make you prisoner to carry into the Comanche village."

"You can not make me prisoner," was the reply. "When

my time comes, I will go, but not before. I give you your lives; save them while there is yet time."

It seemed a strange thing for a single man, surrounded by ten brave warriors, to threaten them with death, and offer them their lives if they would depart in peace; yet this man did it in all confidence, seemingly assured of his power over them, and his ability to destroy them if they did not obey.

The Indians paused in utter surprise as he thrust the pointed end of the torch he carried into a crevice in the rock, where it burned up brightly, and cast a lurid glow upon the scene.

"Will you go, and leave me to do my work?" he said, while he took up from the rock and touched to the flame of the torch two small objects, which looked like thick cords, and which burned with a spitting sound.

By way of answer, the Indians began to close in upon him, when he caught up by the sticks two pieces of fireworks, something like "Roman candles," which he whirled about with inconceivable rapidity, shooting them directly in the faces of the astonished Indians, who thought their last hour had indeed come. Their valor was not proof against this mode of attack, so utterly unlike any thing of which they had ever heard.

Pop, pop, pop! went the "candles," full in the faces of the Indians, who had cut him off from the cliff. One or two, thinking nothing of the danger, leaped headlong from the cliff into the dark gulf below. Others fell on their faces, crying for mercy like children, while those in front sought safety in flight, pursued by the Scout, whose wild laugh struck terror to their hearts as they fled, calling on their gods to save them. At last the noise ceased; the last Indian was gone, and the Indian Terror stood alone upon the hill, laughing until the rocks echoed back the sound.

"Aleeta! Aleeta!" he shouted, at the top of his voice; "Come to me."

He waited a moment for the answer, and then sent a long whistle quivering among the rocks. This was answered by a note equally distinct, and in a few moments more he was joined by Blazing Star.

"Your vengeance is terrible, David," she said in a sad tone.

"You are right, Alecta," he replied; "and yet the provocation was as terrible. It galls me that the man I hate, this accursed Silver Lance, never crosses my path. When he is dead, my martyred innocent can sleep in peace. Let me look on his dead face and I will turn my back forever upon the Comanche country, and lead a new life under the name I have lost so long. Where are the rangers?"

"After the Comanche at a gallop. None save Texans, led by such a man as Ned Campbell, would take the risk they do. Shall we follow them?"

"You may go, for I must to my workshop to prepare new 'thunder.' I laugh, sometimes, when I think how my experience in pyrotechnics, long ago, has borne fruit, and made me the terror of the Comanche."

"I should like to visit your workshop, David. You never would allow me to go in there."

"I take my life in my hand every time I work," was the reply. "No, no, dear girl; whatever happens to me, your life must be spared for higher and nobler work. You will return to the home you will adorn, be happy, rich, and high in social rank, but I know your heart. You will not forget poor David and the work we have done together in the Comanche land. If we could wring the proofs from the hands of Minnitash to establish your identity, you would not need to stay here another day."

"You need not fear that I would forget you, David," she replied. "I would not be content unless you went with me, wherever I might go."

"And so I will, if I live. Where is your horse?"

"Nearly half a mile distant."

"Get him at once and ride to the village. All this fighting will probably rouse the other villages, if Silver Lance has not sent to them already for help. Should he do so, these brave Texans would be in danger, and might need my help. Should such be the case, get to the south peak as soon as you can, and send up the three rockets which you will find under the mountain pines, to the left of the hanging rock."

"You are prepared for every turn in the game, Ned," she said, admiringly.

"I have made it the study of my life. Go, and bring me word as quickly as you can."

She found her horse under the shelter of the cliffs, where she had left him, loosed the lariat, mounted, and rode away at a rapid pace upon the tracks of the rangers. It was a half-hour's ride to the Comanche village, and as she neared it she heard the cheers which announced the triumph of the rangers. Riding boldly into the village, she found them in possession, but it was an empty triumph, as far as prisoners were concerned.

Silver Lance had reached the village enough in advance to give the alarm, and the women and children had escaped, driving before them the great cavallada which always gathers about a village of the "horse Indians." But the lodges were left in confusion, and the rangers were ransacking them in search of plunder.

There was little to be had, for the simple Indians do not collect many articles of value to white men, and most of these had been carried away in their hasty flight.

A great fire had been built in the center of the village, and about this the leaders of the expedition were grouped, forming new plans. They had hoped that Silver Lance, rendered desperate by the calamities which had fallen upon him, would defend his village without further flight, but in this they were disappointed.

"Beyond punishing the scoundrels for their raids into Texas and Mexico," said Campbell, "I don't see that we have gained a great deal by the fighting we have done. We are further off than ever from the recovery of your daughter, Señor Castelar."

"It would seem so," replied the Mexican, sadly. "I do not know what to counsel now. Ha; there is the girl who has done us such good service."

"Welcome, Blazing Star!" said Campbell, advancing. "Will you alight and join us?"

"No," replied the girl; "I have no time to stay. I see that you have not been able to take any women and children prisoners."

"Silver Lance had the heels of us, knowing the way so well, and he ran off the whole village before we could get here."

"That is bad," said Blazing Star, gravely. "I am sorry that you could not get them, for you might have made terms with Silver Lance, who will now get help and come back."

"That is what I am afraid of," returned Campbell, uneasily. "What direction will the auxiliary force come from?"

"From the north; the two chiefs, like Silver Lance, know the great mystery of the white men, and are bound by their vows to fight for one another."

"What does she mean by that?" demanded Castelar, as he saw the young captain start and look annoyed.

"They are *Masons*," replied Campbell.

"*Indian Masonry*? Tush."

"You have a wrong idea of Indian Masonry if you think that they are not true brothers. Indian Masonry has saved my life twice, and may do it again. I am sorry that you did not try Silver Lance when you visited him, for I am confident that your mission would have had a different result. I fear, however, that it is too late now."

"I did not think of it."

"If you are brothers of the great mystery," remarked Blazing Star, "you have done wrong not to prove yourselves such in the eyes of Silver Lance. He is a true brother, and to serve a brother, would do almost any thing. It may not be too late yet, but I fear it much."

"I am really annoyed at this," said Castelar. "Why did I not know that Masonry was an Institution among the Indians?"

"You ought to remember that Masonry has a place wherever the sun shines," replied Campbell. "However, there is nothing for it now but to go on as if nothing had happened. Come with me," he added in a whisper, "and we will leave a token in the lodge of Silver Lance."

No matter what the token was which Ned Campbell placed in the lodge. It was something which would be understood, and having done this, he called out his men and ordered them to replace everything as they found it in the lodges. This

done, he drew out of the village and made a camp upon a rising ground from which he could note the approach of the enemy. Blazing Star, who could do no more, rode slowly back toward the hills, when, as she passed a clump of bushes a man started up suddenly and caught her horse by the rein. The rays of the moon falling on the upturned face, showed her Minnitash, the Comanche Prophet.

She was again insnared.

CHAPTER XII.

THE GREAT MYSTERY. THE CHIEFTAIN'S PROMISE.

MORNING came, one of those glorious mornings which can only be enjoyed in a semi-tropical clime. The rangers still remained in their camp upon the slope from which they could see for miles over the prairie, and note the approach of the enemy. As the sun rolled up in the sky, Campbell, who was on the watch, pointed to a solitary Indian at least five miles distant, who had ridden to the top of the slope and was looking out toward the village. Campbell had a glass which he leveled upon the distant warrior, and by means of the powerful lens was able to make out the form of Silver Lance. The chief remained stationary for a single moment and then waved his hand. A moment more and a long, single file of mounted warriors crossed the slope, stringing out like a great moving serpent across the plain. Silver Lance had found help.

"Mount, boys!" cried Campbell. "By Jove we've got our work to do over again, for, as I live, the rascal has got a big force at his back. Not less than eight hundred this time."

The rangers were quickly in the saddle, and dashing away at a long stretching gallop toward the East, where the pass entered the mountains. The Indians did not follow them, but headed toward the village, and the rangers reached the pass about the time the Indians poured into the village, expecting to find it in ruins. Silver Lance was at their head

and beside him rode two chieftans, one a man about fifty years of age, partly white, but with a rather good-natured looking face, and the other a dashing warrior of about twenty-five.

"These white men have spared your village, Silver Lance," said the elder of the two chieftans as they pulled in their horses. "They are not like these dogs of Mexicans who burn and destroy wherever they go."

"They have done worse than that," hissed Silver Lance. "They have slain my warriors. Come into my lodge, chieftans, and we will have a talk. Let the white dogs beware of us."

They entered the lodge, and Silver Lance produced pipes. He lighted them and seated his guests, when his eyes were riveted upon a strange emblem pinned upon a white blanket, which hung from the wall of the lodge. Both chiefs started to their feet and made a sign of respect and reverence.

"See!" cried Silver Lance. "The Great Mystery is before us. Have we been fighting with brothers? Why was not this known before blood was shed?"

"It was not to be so," replied the older chief. "The Great Spirit willed that the Comanche should suffer by the hands of brethren. There is no hope of peace now, for few among the Comanche know the 'great mystery.' They would not know why we sought to make peace with the slayers of our brothers and would demand the battle. Let us go."

As they left the lodge the last of the mounted Rangers disappeared in the distant pass. Whatever happened, they had found a refuge from which it would not be easy to drive them by force of arms. But the young warriors who followed Cabanis and Castodin, with the exception of those who had been with Silver Lance in his battles in the pass, were eager to be led against the white men. But, the poor remains of the band of Silver Lance had no especial desire to again face that terror of their race, the Flying Man of the Hills.

As they leaped into the saddles and rode to the front, a wild yell ran through the ranks of the warriors, and they followed in good order on the track of the three stately chiefs, who, scarcely exchanging a word as they rode, took the advance. Silver Lance was in deep thought, for he saw that

the totem on the wall, the mystic sign of the Great Brotherhood, had not been forgotten by his friends who were, in their rude way, perfect in the craft, and who were not now so hot for the battle since they knew that a brother led the opposing force.

"What noise do I hear yonder?" cried the chief, who was in advance. "Look, look; yonder comes a bleeding man, one of my braves who was with me last night."

They saw a half-naked man shouting as he ran, coming from the direction of the mountain pass. The blood was dropping on the grass from half a dozen flesh wounds which were only so many scratches to the hardy Indian. He ran to the side of his chief and caught at the pommel of his saddle.

"Where would you go, Silver Lance?" he cried. "Have not the Comanche lost blood enough because you will not give up the white man's child?"

Silver Lance coolly bared his hatchet, but the older chief laid his hand upon the uplifted arm.

"It will not do, chief; you have few enough fighting-men without slaying so brave a man as this. Besides, he brings news."

"You only go to death if you enter the pass, warriors and chieftains. The white men are there and you have not men enough to force the pass. There, too, is the Flying Man of the Hills, and his big thunder is on every rock. Beware what you do."

But they advanced toward the pass, halting just out of easy rifle range, and the older chief carrying a white flag, and accompanied by the other two, advanced half-way and beckoned the whites to send an equal number. Senor Castelar, Campbell and De Forest went out on horseback to meet them, and as soon as the eyes of the young captain fell upon the older chief he extended his hand frankly.

"Cabanis!" he cried. "The only Comanche I ever liked. How are you, chief?"

"If my young white brother loves the Comanche, why does he come into the country to slay our men?"

"Ask Silver Lance who struck the first blow. We came in peace to find this old man's daughter, but we could not get her out of the hands of Silver Lance."

"Who was it who set a sign upon the walls of the lodge?"

"I am the man," replied Campbell. "All these know the great secret."

"So do we," replied the chief. "Why did not the Gray Hair speak to Silver Lance when he first came?"

"If I had done so," said Campbell, "what would have been the result?"

"Much bloodshed would have been saved."

"Look here, Silver Lance," said Campbell; "I don't think you would lie about a matter like this, and so I ask the question. If the Gray Hair had said that he knew the mystery would you have given up his child?"

"No!" replied Silver Lance, fiercely. "What I take, I keep until a stronger hand than mine tears it from me."

"You hear him, Cabanis," said Campbell. "He has refused to give up this good man's child, and I tell you that we must have her. If the band I have now is not strong enough, we will raise and equip a thousand such men and march them into the Comanche country; and, as I live, if we do that I will not leave a standing lodge, a horse or rifle in the Comanche land."

"My brother is a talking a big talk."

"But I mean it, Cabanis. You may think of attacking us in the pass, but think twice before you do so. There is more to dread than you dream of in such an attack, and as far as I am concerned I do not wish to shed more blood upon this expedition."

"What do you ask?"

"Let Silver Lance give up the girl and we will make all the widows who have lost their husbands so rich that many braves will be eager to take them into their lodges. We will do more than this; each chief shall have a new rifle and a keg of powder. Can we do more for one squaw?"

"My brother speaks well and Silver Lance should listen to his words. He has not so many braves that he can afford to waste them."

The younger chief nodded gravely and it was evident that the proposition of the white man was favorably regarded.

"Let Cabanis and Custodin remember the token I sent them by the hand of Bah-ton-est-ah," hissed Silver Lance.

"Did not the white brothers send us a token as well?" replied the sage old chief. "When it is good to fight, no man is more ready than Cabanis, but he knows when it is good to make peace. Give up the child of the white man and let them go in peace after they have paid the price."

The chief was about to return a defiant answer when another man who had stolen up unobserved joined them. It was Minnitash the Prophet, who cast a malevolent glance at the white men as he drew near Silver Lance and whispered in his ear. The chief started and a look of fierce joy came into his face. He raised his head and spoke.

"It is good," he said. "Why should I fight against fate any longer. The white man shall have his child."

"Let there be no trick this time, Silver Lance," said Campbell. "You can't palm off any one else on us as you tried to do the other day. And, one thing more; we must have the widow of Hundo, too, and I will take her back to her father. Let the chief set a ransom on her, and we will pay it."

"Five horses and a rifle," said Cabanis. "She is white; she will make some Texan brave a good squaw."

"I agree to the price. She may take her boy with her or leave him, as she likes. How are you going to prove to us that the girl you will produce is really the daughter of Senor Castelar?"

"I can give you the garments she wore, the chain of gold which was about her neck, and you shall hear her say that she once wore them. She was not so young but she can remember."

"Will that proof satisfy you, senor?"

"There is another proof which can not deceive. My daughter has a small mark—a blue cross upon her left arm above the wrist. It was made by the husband of her nurse; the woman who was killed when she was taken."

"You shall have that proof," said the chief, quietly. "When and where shall the ransom be paid?"

"Name your place and time," said Campbell, "and give me a sign that you mean to deal justly."

The chief hesitated a moment, and then gave a sign which all understood. If he did not keep his word now he was no longer a true brother of the Great Mystery.

"I am satisfied, brother," said Campbell. "Where shall the lost daughter be given up?"

"There," replied the chief, pointing to a cliff half a mile away—"at the foot of those rocks."

"When?"

"To-morrow, at daybreak."

"Cabanis," said Campbell, "do you swear to me by the sign which I give you, that this shall be done as far as you have the power?"

"I swear it," replied the chief.

"And you, Custodin?"

"I swear too," replied the young chief. "It is better so."

"You shall have her," cried the chief. "Be at the foot of the rocks when the day breaks, and you shall see her. Cabanis, I leave the village in your care while I go with Minnitash to bring the white man his child."

He cast a dark, strange look about the circle, and rode away with Minnitash by his side.

"He gave up too easily," muttered Campbell. "I don't half like it, somehow."

"Do you think he means to deal fairly?" asked Castelar.

"I don't know; I can swear to these two chiefs that they will keep their word to the letter, and I don't really see how he can play us false. Cabanis, we will leave you now, and when the day breaks, come to the place he pointed out. We will come alone, for we know that Cabanis will keep his word, and that Custodin is a true brother."

The two chieftains bowed gravely and rode away, and Campbell and the rest went back to their men. As they came into camp, they saw Veracity Snodgrass seated on a stone, eating voraciously.

"Hullo, Cap!" he said. "Durned glad to see ye, *I* am! I tuk a leetle trip over thar an' see Jan arter you war safe, an' 'vited him to come back to camp. The low cuss won't come."

"Why not?"

"He says he's got better business than fightin' Injuns. He's got so he lies like a thief, Jan bez, an' he won't believe a man when he tells the truth. I told him I killed two thousan'

Kimmanche, an' durn my hide ef he didn't ez good ez say I war a liar !"

"Have you been with him all the time ?"

"Skacely ; I've bin with that critter the Flying Scout a while."

"Where is he now ?"

"Who kin tell ? He told me that ef you would like to see his workshop, to take you up thar."

"His workshop !"

"You bet ; you don't s'pose he c'u'd do the things he duz unlest he hed some place whar he c'u'd work ? Who wants to come ? He sez his work ar' about dun hyar an' he don't keer who knows whar he lives now."

"I am curious to know something of this strange man," said Senor Castelar. "Let us go at once."

Twenty or thirty of the party accompanied them, and they clambered up the rocks and crossed a level plateau, a distance of half a mile. Here their guide paused before an irregular heap of rocks and made a signal for silence.

"Mebbe he's cum home," he said. "I'll give the signal."

He whistled and waited for an answer but none came back.

"He ain't hyar ; now I'll open the door fur ye."

He caught hold of a large rock and by a slight effort of strength moved it to one side and revealed a deep opening with rude steps leading downward. They entered, one by one, and went down the steps, when Snodgrass drew back the stone so as to cover the opening. A moment later they heard the noise of a match struck against the stone and a rude lamp shone in the hand of their guide. Descending the steps he again took the lead through a narrow passage and came into a large room furnished with chairs, a rude table and a bed. Upon a box in one corner they saw a number of chemical instruments which had been carefully used. In another corner rude shelves supported quite a number of books.

"This man is a chemist and student," said Senor Castelar.

"Look at this apparatus ; look at the books."

"He lives here," said Snodgrass. "Now, come on an' see his workshop."

They pass through another opening into a room larger than the one they had just left and it was with difficulty that the gentlemen suppressed the loud utterance of their surprise. Here were tools which were only to be had in large cities which this remarkable man had evidently made for his own use. A stone anvil was in one angle of the room next to a rude forge. Chemical contrivances of all kinds were scattered about.

"Where did he get his powder to make all these shells he uses?" asked Campbell.

"He made it."

"Where did he get his iron, then?"

"You'll find further on in this hyar cave what you'll find nowhere else except in Japan—a bed of natural steel."*

As they stood gazing at the many evidences of the skill of the Flying Scout, Snodgrass suddenly started and cast a wild look about him.

"There is something evil in the air to-night. I feel it and must know what it means. Git back to camp all of you for I have work to do."

• CHAPTER XIII.

HOW SILVER LANCE KEPT HIS WORD.

We left Blazing Star in the clutches of Minnitash, the prophet—his savage face close to hers, and his fierce eyes seeming to pierce her to the heart. For a moment neither spoke, but she knew that the silence on his part was the glumming wrath of the volcano which might at any moment burst and overwhelm her. He broke the silence first.

"When Minnitash built up the prophet fire on the mountain and put Blazing Star there to watch," he said, "he

* The author of this work has seen, and can show any one skeptical on the subject, a specimen of natural steel which, when placed in the fire, can be at once welded into a knife or chisel which will turn the edge of any common steel instrument now manufactured. The ore resembles iron and was brought from Japan.

knew not what he was doing. He could not know that a traitress heart was in the bosom of the Blazing Star."

"Why do you call me traitress?" she demanded.

"Are you not? Have you not just come from the white men, and are you not friend and companion of the Flying Man—the dog who has slain so many Comanche braves? Do not lie to a prophet, Blazing Star."

"Take your hand from my rein or I will shoot you, Minnitash," she cried. "I will not be insulted by you or any other of Indian blood."

"Hah!"

He caught her suddenly by the other wrist and dragged her out of the saddle and held her firmly in his powerful grasp.

"Release me, you red villain!" she cried. "Of all the insults which have been heaped upon me by the Comanche, this is the worst. Traitor to the Comanche! I have only lived to baffle them in their bloody schemes. I have leagued myself with the Flying Man and have stood by when he launched the globes of death among you. I know that I am white, and that with you and Silver Lance rest the secret of my birth. I demand to know the secret."

"You shall know that when you stand at the stake, as you shall do. Where the Comanche can not love, he prefers hate, and hate is all you can have at the hands of Minnitash. You shall die."

"Not until my time comes," said the girl, proudly. "Who am I? What is my father's name, and where does he live? If I could have satisfied myself as to that, you should have seen me no more."

"I know your father's name and dwelling-place," said Minnitash. "So does Silver Lance. It will be a dagger in your heart to know that you have met him face to face and neither of you knew the truth. We waste words; come with me to the mountain."

"Why should I go there?"

"Because I demand it; I am your master and you my slave. Call upon the Flying Man now and see if he will hear you! Wicked woman—no longer the friend of the Comanche, come to your doom."

"At him, Spot!" she shouted.

To the surprise of Minnitash the Spotted mustang reared and struck at him viciously with his fore feet. Staggering back from the shock the Indian shortened his lance, and, still holding the girl firmly by the wrist, pressed the point of the lance firmly against the breast of the raging animal.

"You have power over him," cried the old prophet, savagely. "Speak to him or he is dead."

"Back, Spot!" she cried. "Be quiet!"

She saw that the noble animal would be slain if she did not interfere, and at her word he fell back with drooping head and dropped tail, and followed them like a dog as they turned toward the mountain, Minnitash never even for a moment releasing his grip upon the wrist of Blazing Star. An hour's walk through dark passes and rough paths brought them to the temple in the mountain—the place which had given Minnitash the *sobriquet* of Hill Prophet. A dark, dismal amphitheater walled in on every side by massive rocks, in the center of which, in a roughly-built stone house, blazed the sacred fire of the Comanche. Into this building the prophet led his captive, and taking away her weapons bound her hands fast and tied her firmly to a post in the center of the room.

"Here you stay until Silver Lance returns," said the prophet. "He has fled with the women and children to bring aid from Custodin and Cabanis. They will come at early morning and you shall see these white dogs swept from the face of the earth."

"You reckon too much on the power of Custodin," replied the girl, in a mocking tone. "You forget that the Flying Man is the friend of the white men."

"The Flying man is not a Spirit," was the reply. "A bullet can take his life as well as mine."

"The bullet is not molded which is to take the life of the Flying Scout."

"We shall see," was the reply. "Speak no more, for I will not answer."

Through that long night he sat in silence, rising only to replenish the fire, and even then scarcely removing his eyes from her person. When daylight came he placed food be-

fore her and she made a hearty breakfast, while he stood by the door, the only mode of exit from the temple. When he had finished, he again bound her to the post, and leaving the temple, secured the door on the outside and went away. A rapid walk of half an hour brought him to an elevated rock, from which he could see the broad plain stretching away to the north, the home of his native tribe. He saw the rangers in their camp, and, rapidly descending the slope, far away, the long line of warriors who followed Custodin.

"They are coming—they are coming," he cried. "I go to meet them."

His horse was in the pass below, where he kept him when visiting the temple. Descending the rocks quickly, he made a circuit and reached the village after the three chieftains had gone out to confer with the white men. He at once joined them with the result we know.

Blazing Star was too firmly bound to permit her to cast off her bonds, although she made every effort to do so. Again and again she struggled, but after a time gave up the useless labor and resigned herself to her fate. After some hours, the sound of steps was heard outside, the door was flung open, and Silver Lance, followed by the prophet, strode into the apartment.

"So then, Blazing Star has always hated the Comanche?" he hissed. "She did not intend to come into the lodge of Silver Lance."

"I would have killed myself with my own hand sooner," was the proud reply.

"Do not speak too boldly, Blazing Star. My blood is very hot against you, and in my wrath I might do something which it would not be good for a great chief to remember. A great chief! Has not Custodin betrayed me? Have not the white men and the Comanche chiefs made me no better than a dog? See: I have promised that the white man shall have his child."

"You will keep that promise better than the one you gave before?"

"Yes; he shall have her. Minnitash, bring the little garments which were worn by the daughter of Mexico."

The prophet opened a sort of cupboard in one corner of the room, and brought out a complete suit of clothing, such as is worn by Mexican girls of high rank. The moment Blazing Star saw them she uttered a cry, for at the sight of these she remembered!

"I see the Blazing Star knows these," said the chief. "Let me ask you one question. Will you be the squaw of a chief who has no warriors left, and who has been made a dog by white men?"

"Never!"

"It is good; when the sun rises I will give the white father his child."

This promise sounded like a threat hissed through the white teeth of the angry chief. Blazing Star passed a night of terror, for she feared the coming of the morning, because she did not know what that morning might bring forth. Where was the Flying Scout, and why had she left him in the moment of triumph only to fall into the hands of Silver Lance? Outside the door the chief paced restlessly up and down through the long night, eagerly waiting for the morning which seemed long in coming.

Long before daybreak Senor Castelar and his son, with Ned Campbell and De Forest, were at the appointed place. Custodin and Cabanis came later, but in time, for the sun had not yet risen from his bed in the East when the two chieftains came up alone. The gray light of morning began to appear, and the summits of the snow-clad mountains were in a glow. They stood waiting for the appointed time when the orb of day should roll up from behind the hills.

It came at last in all its glory, and as the broad disk came out, a voice called out to them from the cliff above their heads:

"The sun is here, white men, and here am I."

They looked up and saw Silver Lance standing upon the cliff above them, glaring down at them with flashing eyes.

"You have the word of a great chief," he cried. "I said that at sunrise you should have your child. Is it not so?"

"It is good," said Custodin, "bring her, then."

Silver Lance turned and waved his hand, and a moment later Minnitash appeared leading Blazing Star by the hand.

"White man," shouted the chief. "You see your child, the one I stole from you, years ago. On her wrist is the blue cross, and these are the garments which she wore."

He flung out into the air a little bundle and it fell into the midst of the party below. Campbell put it into the hands of Senor Castelar, who opened it and spread the little garments on his saddle-bow. As he did so he uttered a cry of joy.

"I am satisfied, chief; the Blazing Star is my child."

"She was to have been my wife; I loved her and it is hard to give her up."

"You shall be rewarded."

"Does Blazing Star wish to go to her father?" demanded the chief.

"Yes."

"Go, then; I have kept my promise and give you your child."

As he spoke he caught the girl firmly by the waist and tossed her over the cliff! A wild cry of horror was heard as the unfortunate girl shot downward to her doom. Every man covered his face that he might not look upon her death, and even stout-hearted Custodin groaned aloud. Silver Lance with a wild, triumphant laugh leaned forward to witness her death, when he was suddenly lifted into the air and went down headlong in the track of his victim, and those who looked up involuntarily saw the Flying Scout standing upon the cliff, with a hatchet in his hand facing the prophet. They saw something more. While the chief was falling like a stone, head-foremost, Blazing Star was floating downward with a graceful, bird-like motion, and long before she reached it her enemy lay dead, while a triumphant shout went up as they saw broad wings expand and bear the girl safely into the gulf below!

"You next!" shrieked the Flying Scout, "and then I am avenged."

The prophet would have fled, but the hatchet of the avenger was in his brain, and leaving him there to rot, the Flying Scout leaped out into the air, and came floating down into the midst of the astounded party to find Blazing Star, or Ermioia de Castelar in the arms of her father, who had risked so much to save her from her enemies. Her brother, with a low

ing light in his eyes, stood near, a silent witness and participant of their joy, and when at last the happy father released her she threw herself into the extended arms of Valdez Castelar.

"My work is done," said the Flying Scout. "Senor Castelar, look in my face and tell me if you know me."

"David Carter!" cried the old Don. "I thought you dead years ago."

"Ay, David Carter, the husband of that unfortunate woman who fell by the hand of Silver Lance on the day when you lost your child. On that day I fled away a madman. When I came to myself I found myself among these rude rocks, clothed in skins, a perfect wild-man. I had been here five years as I now know, but then I took no note of time. I remembered then the purpose with which I came here, to avenge the murder of my wife and to find your daughter. So far I had done nothing more than to slay every Comanche who fell in my way.

"In my time of madness I had found the cave in which I have lived so long. Instinct took me back to it, and as reason came back I began to work. Before I came to Texas and Mexico I had a perfect knowledge of the manufacture of gunpowder, and of all kinds of pyrotechnics. I was also a good machinist, and had made chemistry a study. When I found that bed of steel and iron in my cave, I saw that if I could manufacture powder in sufficient quantities, and make hand grenades and small shells which could be thrown from the hand, I could make myself a terror to the Indians. New thoughts occurred to me from time to time, and at last I carried my work to such a pitch of perfection that it astonished myself.

"I saw your daughter, one day, senor, and assured myself that she was your child, but how could I find the proof? Watching my opportunity, I made her prisoner and took her to my cave. When she understood my mission, she joined me heartily in the work before me, she striving to obtain from Minnitash or Silver Lance the proofs of her birth—I to avenge my dear wife. Without proof she dared not go to you and say that she was your child. Our work was hard, but it is done at last."

"But, surely, there are many things which you needed in manufacturing the strange articles you use, which you could not obtain here?"

"I brought these things myself from Santa Fe, where they were landed by my orders. It was laborious work, but at last all was complete. Let us not waste time here, but go on our way."

The promised ransom of Erminia and Unda was paid, and Blazing Star rode for the last time through the Comanche pass. She still wore the gray robe which she had worn since the night she last met Campbell in the mountains. As they rode through the passes, a man with a very heavy pack toiled down the rocks and stood in their way. It was Jan Pliester, and the pack was the result of his digging in the mountain stream.

"Dot Snodgrass tolt me I moost coom here unt vait," he said. "Vere ish mine horse?"

"Cabanis," said Blazing Star to the chief, who was riding with them, "this is a friend of mine. Let one of your young men give him a horse, and he shall be paid."

Cabanis made a sign, and one of his men dismounted and gave up his horse to Jan Pliester.

"By the way," said Campbell, "what has become of Snodgrass?"

"Stranger," said the Flying Scout, turning in his saddle, "I never tell a lie; my father wouldn't 'low me, fur he'd skin me alive."

The nasal twang was unmistakable—*Snodgrass and the Flying Scout were one!*

Amid exclamations of astonishment from all hands, the band rode on, leaving the instruments of the vengeance of the Flying Scout lurking in the cave which he was never to see again.

Cabanis and a hundred of his men, and Custodin with a few followers, rode with them until sunset, and they camped side by side on the prairie.

Guards were set, as a matter of caution, though Ned Campbell knew that nothing was to be feared from the Comanche.

In the morning they were to separate, and in parting, the

hands of the brothers of the "great mystery," Indian and white, met in a fervent clasp.

"Brothers," said Custodin; "see how much evil has been done because you forgot that the 'great mystery' covers all the earth. If you come into the Comanche land again, send a sign which we will know. May a chief ask a question of the Flying Man?"

"Ask it," said Carter.

"How does the Flying Man go down the rocks?"

"I don't mind telling you now," said Carter. "Look here and you will see."

He put his hands to his sides, and by a quick movement, unfolded a strong whalebone frame, to which the strange cloak he wore was fastened, in such a way that the cloth spread out on each side, forming two huge wings, with the concave side down.

Upon the extreme tips of these wings loops of strong raw-hide were fastened, to be grasped at the moment of leaping. In fact, these wings were perfect *parachutes*, capable of sustaining a greater weight than that of either Carter or Blazing Star.

The whalebone frame was fastened to a strong leathern collar, which, in its turn, was strapped in place by loops passing under the arms.

It was a perfect yet simple contrivance, and they understood how the Scout made such fabulous leaps without danger to himself.

"Good!" said Cabanis. "The Flying Man has thrown dust in the eyes of the Comanche for many a year."

Presents were exchanged; the parties separated, and the rangers headed merrily to the south, for their work was done.

Erminia Castelar went back to her father's house, and there was welcomed as one raised from the dead.

Shortly after, Senor Castelar sold his Mexican estates and removed into Texas. Two years later, there was feasting in the Castelar mansion, and the daughter of the house became the wife of Colonel Edward Campbell, one of the richest stock rancheros in Western Texas.

A tall man, with a calm, earnest face, and hair tinged with

silver, was among the first to congratulate the married pair. This was David Carter, who owned an estate not far from that of Colonel Campbell. But few knew that this man was the terrible Flying Scout, the scourge of the Comanche; and by his side, now his wife for some months, was the woman we have known as Unda, the wife of Hualpa. Carter had found peace at last.

Jan Pliester lives with his Gretchen on his own farm, in the same township, and his beaming face is seen looking over the shoulder of De Forest, who is there with Rube Best, and others of the rangers.

And as Campbell and the Flying Scout clasp hands, those who know their history look at each other and think of the rain of fire and the dreadful slaughter of the Comanche in the mountain pass. Out of this wild revenge happiness had come at last.

THE END

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DIME STANDARD SPEAKER, No. 7.

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Bonnie Eloise, Sleeping I dreamed, Fare thee well, Katy, Love me little, long, Strike the light guitar, Some one to love, The hazel dell, Oft in the still night, The old folks are gone, My soul in one sigh, Mother, why linger! The good-by at the door, Be quiet, do, I'll call, Round for three voices, The leaves that fall,	The female smuggler, Where is home, Ettie May, Keemo Kimo, In the chamois' track, I had a gentle mother, Poor Thomas Day, Pretty Nelly, 'Tis the witching hour, Forgive but don't forget, Thou art mine own love, There is darkness, Once upon a time, The dearest spot of earth Far on the deep blue sea,	The winds that waft, There is a flower, Anna Bell, Swinging, swinging, Work, work, Wild Tiadatton, A hundred years ago, Widow Machree, I'll dream of thee, Mary of Lake Enon, Mary of the glen, Carry me home, Bime, bome, bell, Oh, whisper what feelest, Yes, let me like a soldier,	Old Josey, Why do I weep for thee, Jennie with her blue e'e, Winsome Winnie, Scenes that are bright, A lowly youth, One cheering word, The low-backed car, Hope on, hope ever, 'Tis pleasant to be young The mother's smile, Marion Lee, Annie Lowe, One parting song.
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